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The Young Child's Lived-Experience in a Full Day Destination Alpine Ski Lesson

by

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Abstract

A deeper understanding of children's experience in recreational programs may provide valuable information about their psychological and physical needs. This research explored the perceived lived-experience of children (n=23) with a mean age of 3.8 years under the instruction of 3 ski instructors, in a full day destination alpine ski lesson. Data were collected from five primary sources over a period of 1 month: observations, field notes, reflexive journal, informal conversations, as well as debriefing sessions with instructors and support staff. Moustakas's (1994) Psychological Approach to Phenomenology, with an emphasis on exploring "human experiences, human behavior and human relationships" guided analysis (Moustakas, 1994, p. XIV). Although the results suggest the child's disposition and the instructional approach employed contributed to the experience of becoming a skier, the primary theme to emerge from the data was the significance of relational learning. Theoretical implications of relational learning are addressed.

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Kate Davies, nee Hacking
Edmonton, 2008

Mark, you captured the essence of skiing so beautifully with the following statement: "Mommy, when I ski, I feel as light as a feather." Your lovely smile, youthful insight and optimism have kept me going throughout this journey.

Matthew, you will always be our little Mousky who jumped the magic carpet, laughed and just kept skiing. Your fierce determination to master all that you try is a constant source of inspiration.

It has been a privilege to share your experience of 'becoming skiers.' I treasure these memories.

Love you to infinity and beyond, Mommy.

For all the young children who endeavor to become skiers: may you gain a lifetime of enjoyment from the sport.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Although the idea for this research emerged from my practical experience as a ski instructor, the need for the research became obvious one autumn day, while watching my two and a half year old son learn to swim. At the end of his half hour lesson, my little boy's face was flushed with excitement. Thrilled by his enthusiasm, I asked if he would like to continue to swim with me by his side. Much to my surprise, he declined, asserting that he would like to go home. In that brief moment, my son reminded me to consider the situation from his tiny perspective, to take stock of his physical capabilities and psychological needs. As his parent, it was my responsibility to respect that he was tired, cold and hungry. Had I ignored the obvious signs and insisted he swim for another half hour to satisfy my own agenda, I may have undermined his enthusiasm and turned a positive experience into one worth forgetting.

Alpine ski instruction is unique in that very young children are often instructed for an entire day. The long day does, however, permit latitude to explore alternative methods of instruction. Because most preschool aged (3-5) children enjoy and routinely engage in activities such as reading, coloring, and free play, a multi-modal approach combining current modeling techniques with developmentally appropriate activities designed to meet the physical, cognitive, psychological and social needs of young children may enrich the young skier's learning experience (Chen & Ennis, 2004; Dubowski, 1986; Jacobson, 2002; Jennings, 1999; Raines & Isbell, 1994; Sayre, 2001; Williamson, 1993). Such an approach may also be invaluable for those students who lack the strength, stamina, or perceived physical competence to master skills and experience the sense of accomplishment essential to inspiring an enduring love of the sport (Weigand & Burton, 2002).

Social Implications and Relevance of the Topic

The potential impact of this study is far reaching and timely. Currently, participation in physical activity among children appears to be declining (Kaur, Hyder, & Poston, 2003; MacDougall, Schiller, & Darbyshire, 2004; Tremblay & Willms, 2003; Trudeau & Shephard, 2005). Consequently, it is becoming increasingly important to gain children's interest in sport from an early age (Kaur et al., 2003; Kondro, 2003; Trudeau & Shephard, 2005). A deeper understanding of young children's perceptions of their experiences in physical activity and recreational programs may therefore provide valuable information about their interests as well as their psychological and physical needs (Chen, Darst, & Pangrazi, 2001; Chen & Ennis, 2004).

New Knowledge and Potential Contribution to the Profession of Ski Instruction

This research explored a multi-modal approach to ski instruction that combined modeling techniques with activities derived from theories grounded in art, play, and narrative therapies. The approach provided a range of mental and physical activities suited to the learning processes of young children (Barrette & Williams, 1992; Dubowski, 1984; Sayre, 2001). Developmentally appropriate activities, designed to promote an understanding of skiing and the ski environment, may reduce anxiety and arouse interest, providing ski instructors with tools to improve communication with their young students (Chen & Ennis, 2004; Cochrane, 1996; Dubowski, 1984; Langley, 1995; Sayre, 2001). In addition, this approach may positively reinforce concepts and skills introduced through modeling techniques, thereby reducing the physical, and possible psychological demands, of engaging in a full day of ski instruction (Barrett & Williams, 1992; Brady, 1998; Hall & Bernoties, 1995; Langley, 1995; Mandigo & Thompson, 1998; Raghurman, 1999). By accommodating a variety of learning processes, this approach may create alternative opportunities for less physically adept children to demonstrate their understanding of alpine skiing, and, in turn, possibly contribute to the development of a positive self-concept and the motivation required to persevere with the sport (Sayre, 2001). In addition, the multi-modal approach may add the variety needed to maintain the young skier's attention throughout the long day (Gullo, 1992; Langley, 1995; Sayre, 2001). Finally, this research may arouse an awareness of the physical and psychological needs of young children who engage in a full day alpine ski lesson.

Knowledge Gained by the Researcher

In addition to providing a window into the participants' learning experience during a full day of ski instruction, the multi-modal approach was employed to gather information about the methods used to extract the meaning young children ascribed to these experiences. More specifically, as a method of data collection, the information accrued from this research revealed that children between the ages of 3 and 5 were able to express affect related to their perceived experiences. Furthermore, given that the multi-modal approach employed to facilitate data collection appeared to contribute to the learning experiences of the participants, future research may explore the potential to employ this approach with other forms of early childhood sport instruction.

The Research Question

The purpose of this research was twofold; first, to gain a deeper understanding of young children's lived-experience in a full day destination alpine ski lesson; second, to employ a multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction to facilitate data collection and, in the process, enrich the learning experience. This research addresses the following questions: From the young child's perspective, what factors may contribute to a "positive learning experience?" What are the possible physical and psychological demands for young children who participate in a full day of ski instruction? Should young children be immersed in a full-day of ski or sport instruction? And finally, what ethical concerns may emerge regarding early childhood ski instruction?

Terms of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to children between the ages of 3 and 5 years who followed a typical pattern of development, had no previous skiing experience, and were enrolled in a full-day destination ski lesson. There were several reasons for purposely selecting participants enrolled in a destination program. First, based on ten years of practical experience instructing preschool age children, in both local and destination programs, I recognized that children visiting from outside the resort area were less likely to possess an understanding of alpine skiing and the ski environment. Consequently, these children were more likely to experience negative affect, such as separation anxiety, which, in turn, may be heightened by the long day. In contrast, children raised in or near a ski resort were more likely to possess a better understanding of skiing, were often grouped together in a "locals" program with friends, and generally tended to be more receptive to the experience.

Definitions of Terms

The term *early childhood* refers specifically to the period between three and five years of age. The term *lived-experience* is generally defined as the descriptions perceived by the researcher, as well as the instructors, of the children's experience. *Perceived* and *lived experiences* are interchangeable.

Perception is a "the process by which the brain interprets information from the senses giving it order and meaning" upon which assumptions of reality are based (DeHart, Sroufe, & Cooper, 2000, p. 145).

A *multi-modal approach* refers to a holistic approach to ski instruction that combines on-hill training, based on modeling practices, with developmentally appropriate yet relevant activities designed to appeal to the different perceptual modes. Moreover, this child-centered approach encompasses the philosophy of experiential learning that promotes *guided discovery* (Dewey, 1938).

For the purpose of this research, the term *developmentally appropriate* is defined according to the tenets of Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy or DAP, as outlined by Barrett and Williams (1992). *Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy* (DAP) is a teaching philosophy that strives to promote a positive learning environment by focusing on the individual's strengths, while taking his or her developmental constraints into account (Barrett & Williams 1992; Reeves & Stein, 1999). Fundamental to DAP is the belief that mastery will result when instruction is modified to meet the "developmental progression" of each child and reflect "the changes that occur across time in all domains of a child's behavior, motor, social, emotional, and cognitive" (Barrett & Williams 1992, p. 2). The basic tenets of DAP, adopted for this study, encompass the following beliefs; "change is age and experience related as well as specific to the individual," DAP is an "interactive teaching paradigm"; and finally, DAP should promote "an inclusive (learning) environment" (Barrett & Williams 1992, p. 2; Reeves & Stein, 1999, p. 4).

The term *inclusive* strictly refers to a practice that accommodates varying levels of abilities in addition to the different modes of learning: kinesthetic, visual, cognitive, auditory and affective. Because this research was limited to participants following a typical pattern of development, the term *inclusive* did not denote participants with disabilities.

Finally, the term "relational learning" refers to a learning experience influenced by meaningful and significant learning relationships within a social context.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review is to provide a rationale for the research. The first section will outline the philosophy underlying this research, will provide support for the phenomenological approach selected, and will discuss the basic assumptions underpinning Moustakas's human science perspective. The second section will briefly introduce the philosophies of education and physical education that have shaped this study, will explain why certain aspects of these philosophies are incompatible with the values and beliefs underlying this research and will explore various theories of learning as these relate to the physical domain. The third section, with reference to literature from the field of counseling psychology, will demonstrate the potential for activities derived from theories grounded in art, play, and narrative therapies to help me overcome some of the common barriers encounter by researchers who interview young children. In light of this discussion, and based on the assumption that knowledge is actively constructed, the fourth section will consider the potential for developmentally appropriate activities including reading, arts and crafts, as well as free play, to contribute to the learning experience during data collection. The fifth and final section of this review will provide a summary of the material discussed.

The Research Philosophy

The underlying theme from the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning this research, to the pedagogical material developed for the multi-modal approach to instruction and data collection, was a child-centered philosophy (Dewey, 1938; Moustakas, 1973; 1994). Central to this philosophy was the belief that children's experiences should take precedence over performance in an early childhood ski program. In addition, this philosophy subscribed to the beliefs that young children actively construct knowledge and that a priori experiences influence both present and future learning experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Phenomenology and Moustakas's Human Science Perspective

Because the intent of this research was to explore the meaning young children ascribed to their perceived experience in an early childhood ski program, phenomenology, conducted from a human science perspective, guided this study (Moustakas, 1994). As a result, the following assumptions underpinned this research: First, was the belief that there are multiple and subjective realities and therefore these are influenced by both individual and social experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Although the experiences gained by participants contributed to their knowledge of skiing and the ski environment, these experiences were not necessarily bound by time and space (Moustakas, 1994). Second, the general approach to inquiry was child-centered, based on each participant's lived-experience in the program (Moustakas, 1973). Third, because personal values and beliefs shaped the philosophical perspectives and the methodological approaches selected, many of the ideas underlying research are value-laden (Moustakas, 1994, Patton, 2002). Consequently, "the concept of epoch," the belief that the research possessed preconceived ideas about early childhood ski instruction, had to be acknowledged and consistent efforts had to be made to be aware of subjectivities (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

Philosophies of Education and Physical Education

Although Dewey's (1938) educational constructivism has shaped many of the ideas that guided this research, his belief that subjective experience could be evaluated empirically appeared to be incongruent with the interpretive beliefs underpinning this research (Dewey, 1938; Moustakas, 1994; Webster, 1965). Thus Matthews' (1992) critique of social constructivism, which stated that "constructivism is the well-known old empiricist wolf in contemporary sheep's clothing" merits consideration for it reflects the difficulty of reconciling some of the assumptions that underpin the more traditional philosophies of education and physical education (Matthews, 1992; Webster, 1965). According to Kirk and Macdonald (1998) "the discrepant incompatibility of beliefs within philosophies such as educational constructivism" may stem from the various interpretations that abound (p. 379). Of equal concern has been the lack of interest in developing a philosophy specific to the physical domain (Kirk, 2001). From a historical perspective, Kirk (2001) claimed that "physical education did not qualify as an educationally worthwhile subject" and suggested that perhaps this was because traditional philosophies of education were limited to more "formal" settings (p. 476). Initially, the intent of physical education was not to inspire or motivate students to become physically active for life, but rather to turn working class children into "disciplined" individuals (Kirk, 2001, p. 479). Kirk and Macdonald (1998) claimed that "failures of curriculum development in physical education may have owed as much to an underdeveloped concern for learning as to the multifarious other factors so often cited in the curriculum innovation and development literature" (p. 378).

Despite its Dickensian antecedents, the current body of literature within the physical domain seems to indicate a movement toward a philosophy of physical education that is "child centered" and developmentally appropriate (Barrett & Williams, 1992; Belka, 2004; Bulger, Townsend, & Carson, 2001; Coker, 1996; Holt, Strean, & Bengoechea, 2002; Peddie, 1995; Reed, Banks, & Carlisle, 2004; Reeves & Stein, 1999; Sherman, 2002; Williamson, 1993). Buschner (1984), however, argued that enlightened ideals espoused at a theoretical level, are not necessarily indicative of what occurs in practice. Her claim may be plausible: Although Kirk and Macdonald (1998) have argued for a more comprehensive theory of learning, specific to the physical domain, three years later Kirk (2001) continued to urge educational theorists to take "serious note of the social construction of the body through schooling, and in particular through processes of physical education and sport" (p. 486). Moreover, nearly forty years after Dewey (1938) expressed his ideals in *Experience and Education*, Levine (2002) was able to cite numerous cases of demoralizing and debilitating practices that have left his young patients scarred by both their formal and informal physical education experiences.

At one time, philosophies such as pragmatism and naturalism held promise for the physical domain (Webster, 1965). However, the acceptance of subjective based theories of knowledge acquisition has rendered the assumption that knowledge may ultimately be assessed objectively, incommensurable (Webster, 1965). For this reason, I have adopted a philosophy of early childhood physical activity based on principles borrowed from Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), educational constructivism, as well as from naturalism. This revised philosophy encompasses the following beliefs: "the instructor should "approach education through experience; approach education through the study of the child and not through the subject matter; develop the whole individual mind, body, and soul, for total fitness; make learning purposeful and creative; and develop individual initiative, as well as individual and group thinking (Webster, 1965, pp. 74-75). In addition, this philosophy embraces "the needs, interests and desires of the students" by promoting "cooperation and self-improvement" and by discouraging "highly competitive performance between individuals" (Webster, 1965, p. 27). Finally, the conviction that a deeper understanding of children's lived experience, in a physical activity or education setting, may be achieved through the student's personal accounts of those experiences, underpins this hybrid philosophy.

While some learning theorists favor a developmental worldview, an ecological or interactionist paradigm may be appropriate in a sport education context, wherein the individual, the environment and the task are closely intertwined (DeVries et al., 2002; Dodds et al., 2001). An ecological theory of learning encompasses the belief that a comprehensive understanding of learning is achieved when interactions between the individual, the task and the learning environment have been considered (DeVries et al., 2002; Dodds et al., 2001). Dodds et al. (2001) suggested that, "…links could be made between (motor learning and pedagogy) to strengthen our understanding of how children learn motor skills in a social and cultural environment" (pp. 405-406). In addition, the authors concluded that if advances are to be made in the physical domain, a theoretical framework including both an information-processing as well as a "situated-and-constraints learning" perspective need to be adopted (Dodds, et al., 2001). Dewey (1938), believed the student's motivation is directly related to his or her experience with a particular task. Moreover, he claimed that the experience gained is shaped in part by the individual's understanding of the task, his or her perception of competence resulting from engagement in the task, as well as by that which the learning environment affords (Dewey, 1938, p. 39). Peddie (1995) argued that although, "purposeful practice is necessary to learn a skill," learners must first "acquire a basic understanding of the task to be performed (during) the introductory or cognitive phase"(2001, p. 3).

In contrast to the developmental and ecological theories of learning, is Lave and Wenger's (as cited in Kirk & MacDonald, 1998) "theory of situated learning," which embodies the belief that learning is "a social practice in a social setting…(and that) learning takes place in particular sets of circumstances, in time and space" (Kirk & MacDonald, 1998, p. 379). Central to this theory is the idea of "legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practices" or more specifically, the belief that knowledge and skills gained through physical education should be ecologically valid (Kirk & MacDonald, 1998, p. 381). Underlying the theory of situated learning is the belief that "relatedness and autonomy" are essential if the goal of instruction is to encourage a life-long commitment to sport (Kirk & MacDonald, 1998).

Methods of Data Collection: Art, Play, and Narrative Therapies

Art Therapy. When working with young children, the process of data collection can be quite challenging (Clark, 2004). Some children may not possess the language skills or have developed the capacity to organize their thoughts to express themselves coherently (Clark, 2004; Dubowski, 1984; Moustakas, 1973). Other children may experience separation anxiety when placed in a novel environment, surrounded by unfamiliar faces (Raghurman, 1999). These are but a few of the reasons why individuals who specialize in pediatric mental health rely on developmentally appropriate techniques such as art, play, and narrative therapies to gain a deeper understanding of their young patients' experiences (Gardner, 1993; Moustakas, 1973; Prager, 1993). Although the therapist and researcher differ with regards to their purpose for gaining insight, both parties ultimately share the tasks of collecting and analyzing information pertinent to the child's experience in a particular context. Moreover, both parties require tools to facilitate rapport, promote understanding and enhance communication (Clark, 2004; Raghurman, 1999).

Dubowski (1984) claimed the desire to draw is innate among young children and across cultures. Because the creative process may be familiar, pleasurable, and soothing, I employed art based activities as an appropriate and effective approach to establish rapport and facilitate conversation. According to Dubowski (1984), employing such practices helps children to relax and share their thoughts. Dunn-Snow (1994) found that rapport was established by simply discussing general aspects of their patient's artwork or any topic the patient selected. As the patient became more comfortable, the therapist proceeded with more specific questions (Dunn-Snow, 1994). One of the benefits of this approach is that it allows the therapist or researcher to attend to a particular topic and to probe for more detailed and meaningful responses (Patton, 2002; Stronach-Buschnel, 1990).

In addition to providing a window into the participants' lived-experiences, the creative process also provided opportunities for children to address psychological issues, such as separation anxiety, fear, or apprehension related to their participation in the full-day ski program (Prager, 1993; Raghurman, 1999). Of equal importance, the process of resolution may have occurred without the participants being consciously aware of it (Prager, 1993).

Although art therapy techniques have been employed as a method of data collection in the physical domain, its use has been limited (Solmon & Carter, 1995; Yuen, 2004). Yuen (2004), who explored the use of drawings as a method of data collection with children, claimed that, “the absence of such techniques is surprising given its potential for eliciting meaningful responses from participants who are children” (Yuen, 2004, p. 461). Of particular relevance are two studies: the first, conducted by Solmon and Carter (1995) and the second by Yuen (2004). Solmon and Carter’s (1995) intent was to gain a deeper understanding of kindergarten and first-grade students’ perceptions of physical education in one teacher’s classes. In addition to making observations, taking field notes and interviewing students and the teacher, the researchers also asked the students to draw pictures of their physical education class. Once their drawings were completed, students were asked to explain, on an individual basis, what they had drawn (Solmon & Carter, 1995). The data collected yielded some interesting results that highlighted the differences between the teacher’s perception of the message she thought she was conveying to students, and the students’ perceptions of the message they received. Moreover, the student’s perceptions differed according to gender (Solmon & Carter, 1995).

Despite its strengths, the use of art as a medium to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ experiences is not without limitations. As a method of data collection, the success of employing art therapy techniques ultimately depends on the skills and abilities of the researcher (Black & Kaczmarek, 1992; Prager, 1993). More specifically, the researcher needs to be comfortable with young children, capable of initiating rapport and be detail-oriented (Black & Kaczmarek, 1992; Moustakas, 1966; 1973; Prager, 1993). In addition, he or she has to be conscious of the potential to misinterpret the participants' work (Black & Kaczmarek, 1992). Goodman and Williams (1998) warned, for example, that although there is a standardized approach for interpreting children's artwork, which may facilitate the process of analysis, such methods are unreliable. Instead, these authors recommended that the researcher ask direct questions, based on the participant's artwork, and refrain from making any assumptions about how and what the participant may have felt at the time of creation (Goodman & Williams, 1998). Although Gottfried and Tonks (1996) revealed that many children three years of age do not possess a sophisticated understanding of language semantics, Yuen (2004) claimed that differences in the meaning adults and children ascribed to the same phenomenon are not limited to the preschool age group: "As I elicited Nacho's perspective of what it meant to hold hands with another person through his drawing (peace), I was able to reassess my interpretation of the meaning attached to holding hands (friendship)" (p. 474).

Despite these limitations, Cochrane (1996) asserted that art is a useful medium to reach minority children who lack the vocabulary to explain how and what they feel. Without alternative media through which to communicate, he claimed these children were at risk of being misunderstood and were more likely to misbehave out of anger or frustration, reactions common among preschool children (Cochrane, 1996; Moustakas, 1973). Although Dubowski (1984) claimed that art therapy techniques may be difficult to employ with young children who have not yet developed representational thought, he asserted that with patience, perseverance and experience, this is a limitation that may be overcome.

Cochrane (1996) combined both art and play therapies to facilitate communication with students and has encouraged teachers to employ such techniques in the classroom (Cochrane, 1996). Within the context of this research, Cochrane's (1996) account was useful for it provided an example of the combined use of art and play therapy techniques in a non-therapeutic setting. Moreover, it provided support for the assumptions underpinning the multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction, based on the principles of art, play, and narrative therapies.

Play Therapy. Both Moustakas's (1973) and Jennings's (1999) approach to play therapy embody the phenomenological strategy and child-centered philosophy that underpinned this research. Moustakas eloquently described play therapy as, "a set of attitudes in and through which children may feel free enough to express themselves fully, in their own way, so that eventually they may achieve feelings of security, adequacy, and worthiness through emotional insight (Moustakas, 1973, p. 2). Moustakas's perspective was appealing for several reasons: First, the author is concerned with developing the affective domain (Moustakas). He viewed therapy as an opportunity to facilitate emotional growth and instill confidence, which he believed was far more valuable to the child than a set of "skills and techniques" (Moustakas, 1973, p. 2). Second, he believed play therapy could be employed with both "normal" and emotionally distressed children (Moustakas, 1973, p. 2). In fact, the author devotes several chapters in *Children in Play Therapy* to normal children and demonstrates how play therapy may be employed to help these individuals overcome stressful situations (Moustakas). This final point supported the assumption that techniques borrowed from child-centered therapies may be employed to facilitate rapport, promote understanding, reduce anxiety and enhance data collection in non-therapeutic settings (Moustakas). Nolting and Porreta (1992), who discussed the importance of play therapy as a model for physical education teachers of preschool children with disabilities, suggested that "maternal behavior associated with attachment-promoting and autonomy-enhancing qualities," such as "intruding and nurturing," may have been helpful in this endeavor (p.184).

Jennings (1999) description of the developmental approach to play therapy, "based on observations of external observable progression of play activity," provided a good account of play therapy as a means of data collection (p. 35). The author asserted, for example, that "all play can be observed and measured . . . although (observations) are influenced by the eyes, ears and value system of the observer . . . (these observations) do not have to infer meaning or give interpretations on the phenomena," a belief echoed by Moustakas (1994).

Like Goodman and Williams (1998), Jennings (1999) rejected the 'cookbook' approach to data collection. Ultimately, she cautioned that assumptions derived from interpretation run the risk of "closing exploration rather than encouraging it" (p. 35). Paley (2004) unwittingly demonstrated the potential for play to provide a rich source of data. In *A Child's Work: The importance of fantasy play*, the author intended to convey the message that fantasy play fulfills an important role in early childhood education. In addition to her detailed accounts of children's experiences during play, she stated that: "I could see that the children's play promoted a long list of social, emotional, verbal and physical skills that could be reported in a fairly straight forward manner" (Paley, 2004, p.

16). However, she claimed the stories children weaved around their play also provided valuable insight (Paley, 2004).

The limitations of employing play therapy techniques as a method of data collection were similar to those cited for art therapy. The importance of our interaction with participants during play was revisited by Wood and Attfield (1996), who claimed that the unpredictable nature of play could result in data that were unrelated to the ski school environment, thereby revealing little about the participants' experiences in this setting. Because storytelling is fundamental to play, there was the potential to shape stories to assist children in the process of connecting their thoughts and feelings to the context (Paley, 2004).

Manning and Sharp (1977) suggested that structuring the play environment may be useful to elicit recall of particular events and experiences (Moustakas, 1973). More specifically, these authors recommended the "all-purpose garment" as an approach to encourage role play without curbing the child's imagination (Manning & Sharp, 1977).

Narrative Therapy. Barragar-Dunne (1997) reminded the reader that, in essence, narrative therapy is the common denominator unifying many forms of therapy including art, play, and drama. As Paley (2004) so vividly demonstrated, most children possess a natural inclination to express themselves through story sharing while engaging in play. The potential for activities derived from narrative therapy as a medium through which to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of their experience during the on-hill component of the ski program merited consideration. More specifically, story sharing was considered from a post-modern narrative therapy perspective, for this approach encompassed many of the key assumptions underpinning this research (Smith, 1997). For example, the post-modern approach subscribes to a social constructivist view of knowledge that emphasizes "partial perspectival knowing (as well as)…inter-subjectivity and therapeutic curiosity" (Smith, 1997, p. 3). More simply put, this approach rejects the ideal of an omnipotent therapist, capable of assessing the child objectively and with certainty (Smith, 1997). Instead, the post-modern therapist views the therapeutic process as interactive; both the therapist and the child work together to understand and resolve the child's issues (Smith, 1997). Gardner (1993, p. 5) refers to this process as "the mutual storytelling technique". The child shares a story and the therapist repeats a similar story but, like Paley (2004), incorporates more adaptive forms of behavior. The following passage, for example, describes one little girl's apprehension about school and the process through which she confronted her feelings during play:

> "I'm not Peter Rabbit anymore and you're not the mother" was the statement from the doll corner that caught my attention. "Why not?" asked the presumed mother. "Because you'd rather be Jack? You could climb the beanstalk, okay?" Neither Peter nor Jack would do; the plot had been derailed by more private concerns. "I'm angry you didn't let me stay home." "I didn't say"… "You wanted me to go away." "No, you can stay home and I'll play with you, said the mother sweetly…"
>
> (Paley, 2004, p. 27)

As a follow up to this discussion, Paley (2004) retold the story with the same characters but had the mother explain why Peter Rabbit went to school; she emphasized that the mother certainly did not want to send him away. Not only does this passage exemplify a perennial issue faced by many children who entered ski school, but also, it demonstrates the potential for stories, embedded in play, to allow young children to identify and resolve issues that may have arisen during the course of their day.

The narrative therapist's role is therefore to gather information by listening to and sharing the child's stories with the intent of facilitating a deeper understanding of what the stories may mean to both child and therapist (Gardner, 1993; Smith, 1997). The activity of story sharing was ultimately what the researcher hoped to gain through art and play. In addition to adopting a constructivist view of knowledge, the therapists who work from the post-modern orientation views development as "situational, specific, and contextual," which reflects the belief that sharing stories, specific to ski instruction and the ski environment, may promote understanding, facilitate rapport and encourage dialogue (Smith, 1997, p. 46).

Clandinin and Huber (2002) stated that, "because we see experience narratively, we study experience narratively. In other words we see narrative as both phenomenon and methodology" (p. 162). Yet narrative inquiry as a method of data collection in the physical domain has been limited. Langely (1995) claimed this omission stems from traditional practices of assessing learning processes "by comparing performance between groups of participants" (p. 116). He therefore conducted a study to "examine the personal experience of student skill learning" (Langley, 1995, p. 116). Langley's (1995) account is relevant for it demonstrates the potential to employ narrative methods in the physical domain. In addition, Borders and Naylor (1993), Palmer (2004), and Rainnes and Isabell (1994) are valuable resources for the researcher who intends to use reading and story sharing as media "to help children find their voice" and to gain insight into their experiences (Borders & Naylor, 1993, p. 5).

A potential limitation of employing a narrative approach to data collection is the time required to engage in this activity. Clark (2000), in referring to the National Literacy Strategy, asserted that to be successful, early childhood educators "require the time and flexibility to build trusting relationships and meaningful contexts for writing, time to talk, to find and respond to each individual child's needs, interests and experience has rightly been a high priority for Reception teachers. Modes of learning, especially the rich vitality supported by play, should be a real feature of varied daily literacy" (p. 72).

Although there appeared to be considerable overlap among the various forms of therapy, activities derived from a mix of theories grounded in art, play and narrative therapies provided the variety required to maintain the participants' attention throughout the process of data collection without being too intrusive (Gullo, 1992; Jones & Somekh, 2005). In addition, by employing these techniques in combination afforded alternative opportunities to converse with participants and gain new insights and perspectives (Gullo, 1992; Jones & Somekh, 2005).

Art, Play and Story Sharing: Part of the Early Childhood Ski Experience

The following section will consider the potential for art, play, and story sharing, as methods of data collection, to enrich the learning experience.

> It is in the development of (children's) themes and characters and plots that children explain their thinking and enable us to wonder who we might become as their teachers. If fantasy play provides the nourishing habitat for the growth of cognitive, narrative, and social connectivity, then it is surely the staging area for our common enterprise: an early school

> experience that best represents the natural development of young children.
> (Paley, 2004, p. 8)

According to early childhood pedagogy, to provide an enriched and engaging learning experience, an early childhood ski program should reflect developmentally appropriate practice (Gullo, 1992). Aeppli (2001) insisted that instruction should "free the child's spirit" (p. 18). Because the learning experience is influenced by the participant's ability to perceive the information transmitted, instructors have to learn to be attuned to their students' perceptions of their experiences and to develop the skills to accommodate a range of learning processes (Coker, 1996; Gullo, 1992; Jacobson, 2002; Luke & Hardy, 1999; Solmon & Carter, 1995). Gullo (1992), for example, described how attention, perception, memory, thinking and problem-solving may affect information processing during the preoperational stage, the period from age 2 to 7 years. He asserted that "because children in the preoperational stage of cognitive development process information, construct knowledge and problem solve in a qualitatively different manner, it is imperative that early childhood educators match early childhood education practices to the ways children learn" (Gullo, 1992, p. 13). Whereas perception may be defined as "the process by which the brain interprets information from the senses giving it order and meaning," (DeHart, Sroufe, & Cooper, 2000, p. 145) perceptual modes are "the avenues through which information is taken in and processed," (Coker, 1996, p. 66). Gullo (1992), Palmer (2004) and Coker (1996) addressed the potential to enhance learning by accommodating all or some of the following perceptual modes; the affective, the cognitive, the kinesthetic, the auditory, and the visual modes. Coker (1996) encouraged physical educators to consider the relationship between learning and perception when developing lessons plans and both Coker (1996) and Palmer (2004) claimed that most learners have a “preferred perceptual mode.” Therefore, to facilitate understanding and enrich the learning experience, they recommended structuring the learning environment to accommodate as many perceptual modes as possible (Coker, 1996; Palmer, 2004). Thus, by providing a variety of media through which events in the learning environment were perceived, a multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction provided additional opportunities to reinforce concepts and skills learned during the on-hill sessions (Gullo, 1992).

Although I questioned the appropriateness of employing modeling techniques as the primary approach to early childhood ski instruction, I accepted that such techniques provided opportunities for children to acquire knowledge through various perceptual modes (Coker, 1996, p. 66). Meaney (1994), for example, examined the effects of modeling on skill acquisition and found these were dependent not only upon the child’s cognitive-developmental level but also on the presentation of verbal cues. Moreover, Adams (2001) suggested that combinations of modeling and verbal cues may be useful during the initial stage of learning to reinforce skill acquisition. In fact, Leithwood and Fowler (1971), who examined “complex motor learning in four-year old children,” found that young children’s cognitive-abilities have been underestimated and “attention, familiarity with teacher and attendant motivational enhancement cannot compensate for guidance in specific motor processes themselves. . .” (Leithwood & Fowler, 1971, p. 788). Although Peddie (1995) concurred that “purposeful practice is necessary to learn a skill,” she noted that learners must first “acquire a basic understanding of the task to be performed (during) the introductory or cognitive phase,” a sentiment echoed by Dodds, Griffin & Placek (2001, p. 3). Thus, in addition to potentially alleviating anxiety, understanding the nature of the task (ski instruction) may also facilitate skill development. Essentially, this is what Thorpe, Bunker and Almond (1986) have been advocating with their Teaching Games for Understanding model.

Many studies have found the benefits of variable practice. Wulf's (1991) study demonstrated that variable practice may be more effective than constant practice when learning a novel motor skill thereby supporting the notion that it may be useful to alternate between indoor and outdoor activities. The author argued that, "children, who have a relatively small repertoire of well-learned movements, seem to benefit more from variable practice" (Wulf, 1991, p. 124). In contrast, Brady (1998) asserted that "skill level and age" appear to limit the effect of "contextual interference" (p. 286). He claimed that, "children may experience sufficient interference under a blocked schedule for a longer period of time . . . introducing high levels of contextual interference too soon may be counter-productive for children" (Brady, 1998, p. 286). Hall and Bernoties (1995), who examined the "interference effect of mental imagery on a motor task," found that mental imagery created contextual interference and enhanced the learning of a motor skill. Finally, Anderson and Vogel (1999) investigated the use of "self-talk" to facilitate learning of the overhand throw among elementary school children and demonstrated that when self-talk was incorporated in the lesson, it may have been effective because "the more students are engaged in the mental activities associated with learning (cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective), the more they learn (Anderson & Vogel, 1999, p. 5). The authors noted, however, to be truly effective the instructor must make the student aware of the connection between the mental process and the physical outcome (Anderson &

Vogel, 1999). Although modeling is considered a relatively effective technique, alternative and complementary approaches to traditional modeling practices are worth considering.

In addition to facilitating the transmission of information, teachers must capture and maintain the student's attention throughout the day. According to Gullo (1992), "physical qualities, meaning, existing knowledge, fatigue, distress or over-excitedness" are factors that may influence attention (p. 13). Consequently, activities such as art, play, and story sharing may not only arouse young participant's attention, but may also provide the variety required to maintain attention over a long period of time (Gullo, 1992). The learning experience does, however, depend on whether the information presented is appealing, as well as on the ability of the instructor to teach the same information in novel ways (Gullo, 1992). Because children are more likely to retain information if

> it is familiar, meaningful and contains an internal organization of its own; they have been actively involved with the material that is to be remembered; they have had repeated exposure to the material that is to be remembered; and if the information is of interest to them and draws their attention,

the multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction appeared to promote understanding (Gullo, 1992, p. 15).

Zeigler (2002) affirmed that if the intent of physical activity is to inspire "joyful and healthful involvement," instruction should follow developmentally appropriate practice (p. 115). Unfortunately, Aeppli (2001) asserted there is a lack of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs and suggested this may be related to the current emphasis on performance outcomes. Paley (2004, p. 33) concurred and stated that "the educational establishment has ceased admiring the stunning originality of its youngest students, preferring lists of numerical and alphabetical achievement goals, while Clark (2000, p. 69) added that "the emphasis remains on skill-teaching, rather than individual learning needs." In *Lessons from the nursery: Children as writers in early years*, Clark (2000) questioned the continued practice of employing traditional methods of instruction that turn learning into a step-by-step process, lacking creativity. Though she was concerned with promoting literacy and writing through play and story sharing, her rationale for employing developmentally appropriate practice is nevertheless valid across educational settings. In summarizing Hall and Robinson's work, she asserted that "play provides a natural setting for collaborative talk, oral rehearsal and refinement" (p. 69). Of equal importance, she claimed that a holistic and "decontextualised" approach to learning may be more inspiring for young children (p. 69). With his claim that "physical education settings are the ideal place for the development of language and speech during the preschools years," Murata (2003, p. 29) extended Clark's (2000) vision to encompass the physical domain. He argued, for example, that "the reinforcement of language concepts and labels during physical activity will help facilitate the comprehension of vocabulary concepts, such as directionality and body position relative to objects and the learning environment" (Murata, 2003, p. 30). Unfortunately, many ski instructors who work with young children posses a limited understanding of the cognitive and developmental levels of the preschool age group. For this reason, they are more likely to assume that young children understand concepts such as, "turn to the right, turn to the left or form the shape of a triangle with your skis." By making a concerted effort to teach these concepts and to explain the meaning ascribed to words may, according to Murata (2003), promote understanding and thereby facilitate motor learning. To achieve this end, the author suggested that language augmentation strategies include "predictable activities, adaptable learning, active scripting, novel and colorful materials, collaboration, verbal utterances, review of completed tasks, bombardment of language concepts as well as employing simple language with a demonstration" (Murata, 2003, p. 30-31). By employing the multi-modal approach, participants may gain a better understanding of alpine skiing and the ski environment. Consequently, learning may be enriched (Coker, 1996; Gullo, 1992; Murata, 2003; Thorpe et al., 1986).

Summary

This review has provided a rationale for the proposed research. First, traditional and contemporary philosophies of education and physical education were reviewed and I acknowledged that both Moustakas's and Dewey's ideas have shaped my research philosophy. Whereas Dewey's educational constructivist approach influenced the pedagogical component of this research, Moustakas's human science perspective shaped the research strategy (Dewey, 1938; Moustakas, 1966; 1973; 1994). I have explained that I selected Moustakas's approach as a theoretical framework for this research not only because the author possessed experience as both a play therapist and as a researcher, but also because his ideals reflect the child-centered philosophy underlying this research (Moustakas, 1973).

Throughout the second section of this review, I explored the potential for activities derived from art, play, and narrative therapies to serve as methods of data collection. With reference to literature from the field of counseling psychology, I have suggested that when given the opportunity to draw, play, or share stories, children tend to be more relaxed, less anxious and consequently, more willing to engage in conversation. In addition, I have outlined both the strengths and weaknesses inherent among this multi-modal, multi-modal approach to data collection.

Underlying the third section of this review is the belief that in addition to serving as methods of data collection, art, play, and story sharing may enrich the learning experience. I have argued that to promote understanding, instruction should accommodate a variety of learning processes and be both relevant and meaningful (Dewey, 1938). In addition, I have suggested that one of the benefits of the multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction may be the opportunities for participants to become active learners (Dewey, 1938; Paley, 2004). With reference to the literature in early childhood pedagogy, I have demonstrated that art, play, and story sharing are developmentally appropriate activities that appeared to contribute to the overall learning experience of the participants (Borders & Naylor, 1993; Gullo, 1992; Moustakas, 1966; Paley, 2004; Wood & Attfield, 1996). Of equal importance, I have highlighted the current debate over the nature and value of art, play, and story sharing in the early childhood curriculum in general as well as within the physical domain (Moustakas, 1966; Paley, 2004; Wood & Attfield, 1996). As Nolting and Porreta (1992) stated, "many times play is ignored in both preschool and early elementary physical education programs" and these authors argued that, "to ignore this concept of play is to ignore (children's) basic educational needs" (Nolting & Porreta, 1992, p. 183).

CHAPTER 3:

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Prior to Commencing the Study

All pedagogical material included in the study was tested with children of the same age as the research participants to determine the appropriateness of language and the usefulness of activities to convey the intended meaning. Pedagogical material included stories, arts and crafts, as well as themes for semi-structured play. The study received approval from the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Review Ethics Board. In addition, I reviewed the ski school mandate, in conjunction with the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance (CSIA) manual, to ensure the program met the guidelines and policies outlined by both the ski school and the CSIA. The names of all participants, including ski instructors and support staff, have been changed to pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Direct quotes and excerpts from interviews with ski instructors are cited in the manuscript as (I1: 01-01-2006, p.1), where "I1" refers to Sally, "I2" refers to Abby and "I3" refers to Helen. Comments or statements made by support staff are cited as (SS1: 01-01-2006, p.1).

On Wednesday October 26, 2005, I met with the Stacey, the assistant manager of the children's program, to discuss the study in greater detail. At this time, I reviewed the proposed program and provided specific details about the activities that formed the indoor component of the lessons. Because the ski school is committed to providing a specific amount of on-hill training, I had to fit the indoor component of the lesson into the mid-day break, from 11:15 a.m. to approximately 1:00 p.m. Within this time frame, the participants also ate their lunch. I was, however, able to work with participants for the first half hour upon arrival and again for half an hour at the end of each day. Once Stacey and I had established a schedule, we discussed both the ski school and my expectations regarding the research process and agreed that we shared a child-centered philosophy. I then presented preliminary drafts of both the information and consent letters for Stacey's approval and forwarded copies of these letters, along with a letter of agreement to conduct the study, once the proposal had passed the ethics review process. To conclude, Stacey gave me a tour of the facilities and the indoor space where the study was conducted.

As a result of this meeting, Stacey agreed to introduce me to the staff during the 8:00 a.m. morning meeting to ensure the instructors, front line staff, and the supervisor, were familiar with the research program and my role at ski school during the 4 week period this research encompassed.

The study was conducted January 2-29, 2006. On the first morning of instruction, I met with parents to explain the nature and potential benefits of the study, I discussed issues of confidentiality and withdrawal, after which I sought consent for their child's participation in the study. I was available anytime thereafter to discuss the study with parents had they required more information or had any concerns they would have liked addressed.

Participants

The participants for this research were selected by purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). Children between the ages of 3 and 5 years who were following a typical pattern of development, had no previous skiing experience, and were enrolled in a destination ski lesson were considered for this research. The sample included 23 participants, 17 males and 6 females. Of the 23 participants, 10 were Canadian, 12 were American and 1 was Mexican. Only 1 child was unable to communicate in English. Eligible participants were enrolled in a full-day destination ski lesson. Parental consent was obtained and those children interested in participating in the study were selected based on the criteria listed above.

While working with young participants, unanticipated situations may arise and interfere with process of data collection. Participant mortality was therefore a concern given the individual, task and environmental constraints associated with early childhood ski instruction. Additionally, psychological issues, which included, but were not limited to fear or separation anxiety, heightened by factors such as jet lag, an unfamiliar environment, a change of caregiver, or by the equipment itself were also concerns (Sundaram, 1995). Activities developed to establish rapport and facilitate communication were therefore employed to minimize the risk of attrition.

To accommodate the time allotted to the on-hill component of the program, indoor activities were incorporated into the extant program. For this reason, activities were conducted between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. as well as between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. Although the intent of this study was to gain insight about the participants' experience during the on-hill component of the lesson, to reduce the risk of leading the participants, conversations were initiated about the program as a whole.

Finally, although according to Patton (2002) it would have been ideal to collect data at a number of different ski schools across Canada, due to limited financial resources, this research was restricted to one location.

Setting

An alpine ski resort located in Canada provided the backdrop for this research. To be considered, the resort and ski school had to meet the following philosophical and practical criteria: Embrace a child-centered philosophy of instruction that values the student's personal experience over his or her performance. Any ski school staff participating in this research must therefore be committed to this philosophy; offer full-day, beginner group lessons for children ages 3 to 5; offer a program that encompasses a minimum of five consecutive days; guarantee, within reason, that participants will be assigned the same instructor for the five day period; and, possess the facilities to accommodate the indoor component of this research. Indoor space must be conducive to activities such as arts and crafts as well as free play. An appropriate area for participants to rest is also required.

A preliminary assessment of possible locations, based on the above criteria, indicated that the resort selected was a viable site to conduct this research. Located in Canada, this ski school is part of a world class resort that attracts skiers from across North America as well as from around the world. Consequently, the number of skier visits and lessons provided were likely to outnumber those of any other resort in the region. A resort that accommodates a large skiing population ultimately facilitated the process of recruiting the minimum number of participants required. Moreover, due to the resort's profile, this research had the potential to attract more attention and generate greater awareness about the needs of young children in a sport education context. However, the fit between the ski school's mandate and the philosophy underlying this research in specific, as well as that of the researcher in general, remained the primary determinant.

Ski Instructor

Although the assistant manager had initially agreed to recommend instructors who had experience and routinely worked with children aged 3 to 5, she instead assigned an instructor to work with me. Although I agreed to work with this instructor, by the end of the first week it was evident that we were not a good fit for several reasons. First, Heather worked with the locals program, which was not the focus of this study; second, her students possessed an understanding of the sport and the basic skills to progress up the mountain; and finally, Heather was neither interested nor committed to the research project. Consequently, at the end of the first week of data collection I approached management and explained why Heather and I were not a good fit. After some consideration, the assistant manager agreed that I could recruit an instructor from the early childhood destination program. I therefore met with the group and explained the purpose and relevance of the research, provided an overview of the program, outlined the instructor's role and addressed any questions that arose. I chatted informally with those instructors who wished to be considered.

Although I elected to work with Sally, I also had the opportunity to work with three other instructors during Sally's days off. All instructors read and signed the instructor participant consent form. The decision to work with Sally was ultimately approved by the assistant manager and supervisor. I then discussed how the indoor activities would be incorporated into the overall lesson plan. Feedback from both the instructor and the supervisor were encouraged.

Multi-Modal Instruction: A Complementary Approach to Early Childhood Alpine Ski Pedagogy

The intent of the multi-modal program, based on activities derived from theories grounded in art, play, and narrative therapy, was to provide opportunities for the instructor to shift the demands from the physical to the cognitive domains while maintaining focus on the task of skiing and the ski environment. Although I had consulted and was familiar with the CSIA manual, the program ultimately conformed to the ski school's protocol for early childhood ski instruction.

Issues of Entry

Four possible issues of entry that were addressed included "access, consent, privacy, and confidentiality" (Mauthner, 1997, p. 17).

Access. Access to participants was granted by the manager and assistant manager of the ski school. I first contacted the manager via e-mail and telephone in mid-August 2005. I then spoke with, Stacey, the assistant manager at the beginning of October and arranged to meet with her on October 26, 2005, to discuss the study in greater detail and to gain verbal support for the ski school's participation in this research. At this time, Stacey verbally agreed and stated she would be comfortable assisting with the process of recruiting participants by grouping children according to the selection criteria outlined in the proposed study. We agreed that I would approach parents of eligible children after they had registered, on the first morning of lessons. Stacey agreed to provide space to accommodate this process.

Consent. I acknowledged and subscribed to the belief that, due to their age and status, young participants were unable to either provide consent for, or to decline, the opportunity to participate in the research project. Although Mauthner (1997) asserted that inequity "exists between the adult researcher and children participants," she stated that "unequal power relationships" may be overcome by adopting a "child-centered approach to data collection" (p. 17). This approach reflects the child-centered philosophy that underpinned this research, which was committed to placing the child's experience, both in the ski program as well as within the research itself, above all other considerations. Upon registration, I met with all parents and children interested in participating in the study. I explained the purpose of the research as well as the benefits and potential risks associated with participation in the study. I made it clear that any child, who voiced or demonstrated a desire to withdraw from the study, would be removed immediately upon request. Had such an incident occurred, I would have follow up with the parents to ensure they were comfortable with their child's decision and the reason for withdrawal. Once the letter of informed consent was signed, the parents were asked to fill out a form detailing their child's background information.

Privacy. Although the issue of privacy was not a concern, space was available to talk to participants on an individual basis should any requests have been made by either the parent or the child.

Confidentiality. As per the recommendation outlined by the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Review Ethics Board, confidentiality was maintained by assigning an ID number and by removing the participant's name from all personal information and data collected. In addition, data are stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I will have access. Finally, all data including interview transcripts, still photographs and field notes will be retained for five years post publication. After this period, the data will be destroyed.

Reciprocity. For participating in the study, the ski school was entitled to: Personalized instructor training in the "multi-modal instructional approach;" access to all materials employed by the researcher; a presentation of the report discussing the outcome of this research. A copy of the report itself will also be provided; and, acknowledgment, in publications of this research, for contribution to the study.

In addition, the resort gained a unique opportunity to demonstrate that the ski school is progressive and committed to considering the long-term impact of early childhood ski instruction. By participating in this research, the program may contribute to the advancement of early childhood ski instruction that may, in turn, set a new standard within the industry and perhaps play a role in shaping the way early childhood sport is instructed in general.

The Researcher

I am a level II CSIA instructor with 10 years experience instructing and coaching alpine skiing. In addition to my role as a graduate student in Sport Psychology at the University of Alberta, I am also the mother of two boys, aged 3 and 4, at the time of data collection.

The Researcher's Role

As the primary investigator, my role in this study was multi-faceted: I envisioned myself as a researcher, an educator and a child advocate. Although unanticipated, I also provided the instructors with on-hill instructional support above and beyond that of my role as a researcher. As a researcher, I represented both the Faculty of Physical

Education and Recreation, as well as the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. I did, at all times, conduct myself in a professional and courteous manner, whether dealing with resort staff, parents, participants or the general public.

To ensure the indoor component of this research complemented the on-hill sessions, I provided the instructor with support related to both the research and teaching processes. Additionally, I was available to meet with the manager on a weekly basis to discuss the program and address any concerns that arose. Although the ski school agreed to support this research, meeting with and informing prospective parents about the study and research process was ultimately my responsibility. Upon gaining consent, it was incumbent upon me to hold the participants' well-being, regardless of whether it was related to the study, above all other considerations.

For the purposes of data collection, my primary role was to develop rapport with participants through direct involvement in the lesson. For this reason, I facilitated group and individual discussions about the participants' experience during the on-hill component of the lesson. In addition, I observed and recorded the participants' behavior during both indoor and on-hill sessions. Audio recording devices were employed to record conversations during both indoor and on-hill sessions while field notes were taken to detail observations. Finally, as a ski instructor and a child advocate, I employed pedagogical techniques that conformed to Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Moreover, I assisted the instructor(s) by helping participants with their equipment, by taking them to the washroom, by serving lunch and assisting with any other task a secondary instructor would normally have performed. Consequently, as a participant-observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002), my presence in the research setting influenced both the participants' as well as the instructors' experiences. More specifically, the children who attended ski school during the month of January, shared a different experience from those who attended the month prior to as well as the months following this study.

Qualifications to Undertake this Research

I am a Level II CSIA certified instructor who possesses: four seasons experience instructing Whistler Kids, (Privates, Valley Kids, Club and Mini programs), Whistler, BC; one season Whistler Kids summer program, Whistler, BC; one season Corporate Sales, Whistler-Blackcomb, Whistler, BC; one season coaching Nancy Greene, Red Mountain, Rossland, BC; one season Sales and Marketing, Sunshine Village, Banff, AB; five seasons instructing Elementary Ski School Program, Kirkland Lake, ON; and, four seasons instructing Pineland Ski School, Raven Mt., ON

Ethics

A proposal for this research was submitted to the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Ethics Review Board and complied with the ethical standards outlined by the aforementioned committee. I took my responsibilities as both researcher and ski instructor very seriously. Throughout the entire research process, I was aware that I was ethically and morally accountable to all parties involved. Moreover, I was aware of my obligations under Canadian law to uphold the principle of "Duty of Care," as it relates to ski instruction (Skiing and Teaching Methods, p. 75). Finally, although I employed art, play and narrative related activities to facilitate discussion, I acknowledged that I was not a therapist, and would seek the expertise of a trained professional if the need arose.

Methods of Data Collection

The procedures for data collection were based on Moustakas's (1994) human science phenomenological approach, discussed in Chapter Two. Additionally, this research drew from Clark's (2004) multi-modal approach developed to explore young children's perceptions of an early childhood program. Not only did a multi-modal approach allow "for triangulation of the findings across the different methodologies," but also, and of equal importance, it embodied the constructivist perspective underlying this program (Clark, 2004, p. 144). A priority for Clark (2004), when developing the Mosaic approach, was, "to include a range of methods in order to allow children with different abilities and interests to take part" (p. 144). Therefore, methods of data collection, specific to the participants, included informal group discussions organized around activities (arts and crafts, stories and free play); direct observations; as well as documentary analysis. The opportunities to share the participants' experiences through any of these media were considered to be a privilege.

Interview Data

Group Discussion. Because all aspects of this study, including the process of data collection, were conducted from a child-centered perspective, the intent of this research was not only to gain insight about into the lived experiences of the participants, but to do so in a manner that respected "the natural developmental stages, needs, interest, desires and feelings" of the participants (Webster, 1965, pp. 26-27). For this reason, activities based on practices derived from theories grounded in art, play and narrative therapy formed the indoor component of the lesson. Essentially, I hoped to create a safe environment, in which the participants felt comfortable discussing the on-hill activities.

Activities to facilitate group discussion therefore included arts and crafts, play, and story telling.

Arts and Crafts. Semi-structured arts and crafts time provided a medium for creative expression and an opportunity for participants to express their understanding of becoming a skier. The purpose of this exercise was twofold; first, to facilitate recall of declarative knowledge and to make the lesson more relevant and meaningful by reconstructing the day's events. Second, to facilitate discussion and probe for details that enhanced the overall descriptions of the participants' experiences (Patton, 2002).

Play. Play is important during the preschool years not only because it provides a medium for children to recall what they have learned by recreating events, but also because it provides the child with a sense of autonomy, which contributes to the developing self-concept (Moustakas, 1966; Paley, 2004; Wood & Attfield, 1996). To negotiate entry into the child's world of play, it was essential to establish rapport with the participants (Moustakas, 1966, 1973, 1994; Patton, 2002). During unstructured play sessions, either the instructor or I observed the participants. Because there was potential for the data procured through observation to be misinterpreted, when possible, one of us was actively involved in the process of play. As a result, we were able to ask direct questions to clarify our understanding of the experiences invented or re-lived (Manning & Sharp, 1977; Moustakas, 1966, 1973, 1994; Paley, 2004; Wood & Attfield, 1996). To maintain the integrity of the data, I recorded conversations and described behaviors in my field notes at two specific times throughout the day or earlier if possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Patton, 2002).

Story: My Day at Ski School. I wrote this story during my last season as a full-time ski instructor. The purpose of the story was three-fold; first, to promote understanding and reduce anxiety. By outlining the day's events, I hoped to facilitate the transition from one activity to the next; second, to provide an effective medium for children to express any fears or concerns they may have had prior to engaging in the on-hill component of the lesson as well as to afford the instructor the opportunity to address the children's or any other concerns; and third, to provide children with declarative knowledge about skiing and the ski environment. An additional reading of the story was intended to reiterate the procedural knowledge gained through modeling techniques. Although the instructor narrated the story and facilitated discussion, she was asked to encourage the children to contribute to this process.

The instructor was also asked to help the students create a story of their own, based on their overall experience. This was to be a collaborative effort, with each participant playing a staring role. Unfortunately, this activity did not unfold as anticipated, primarily because the children required a great deal of prompting and lost interest quickly. Nevertheless, as a method of data collection, storytelling provided a rich and thick source of data. The children responded well to *My Day at Ski School* by sharing their concerns and adding bits information about their experience that they may not otherwise have shared if left to their own initiative (Clark, 2000; Patton, 2002).

Casual conversations with participants. Due to the age of the participants, I did not sit down and conduct formal interviews (Clark, A., 2004; Clark, L., 2000). Instead, I sought opportunities to facilitate dialogue during the indoor components of the lesson as well as during periods of transition, between indoor and outdoor activities. For example, an ideal time to initiate conversation occurred while participants were waiting for their turn to descend the beginner slope. The length of these conversations varied and as the participants became more comfortable, I asked open-ended questions about their ski school experience (Clark, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). For example, I enquired: "What sort of things did you do outside?" and allowed the participant to lead the discussion.

Observational Data

Although there is a wide body of literature that has investigated the nature of observation in early childhood settings, I borrowed techniques developed by Clark (2004) as well as methods recommended by Cartwright and Cartwright (1984). Each participant was observed at various times and while engaging in different activities throughout the day. I kept field notes, as well as audio records for data analysis. I documented my observations twice a day: once after the morning session and again after the afternoon session (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002). The purpose of this procedure was to ensure that I recorded the data soon after it was observed to preserve the integrity of the information transmitted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002). Because I was aware that writing up my field notes in the presence of staff or participants may influence future data collected, I wrote my field notes at a Starbucks café located in close proximity to the ski school. I selected a relatively private and quiet corner, out of the view of patrons ordering from the coffee bar. A plush, overstuffed chair, covered in a regal shade of purple became "my spot." For an hour every morning, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and an additional hour from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the afternoon, I recorded the events and behaviors I had observed earlier in the day. Headphones and a selection of classical music blocked the chatter of skiers and tourists who filled the small coffee shop in a continuous stream.

Documentary Data

Documentary data included digital copies of the participant's artwork; copies of *My Day at Ski School*; the instructor's journal; notes taken during debriefing sessions with the instructor(s) and support staff; audio data transcribed verbatim; as well as my reflexive journal, which I used to record my thoughts and feelings, as these related to the participants and the data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002).

Additional Sources of Data: The Instructor, Support Staff, and the Parents.

The instructor. At the end of each day, I met with the instructor to compare and contrast our observations. The purpose of these daily meetings was to gain feedback about the day's activities as well as to afford me an opportunity to inquire about specific aspects of the lessons and to clarify observations or particular comments made by participants. In addition, the instructor documented her perceptions of the participants' experience during the on-hill portion of the session. I supplied a journal for this purpose (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002)

Support Staff: I met with support staff on occasions when these individuals were available to chat with me. These meeting took place during quiet periods, usually prior to and after lunch. I considered the opportunity to chat with support staff valuable as these individuals provided an additional perspective of the children's experience, notably because their interaction with the children was in the capacity of emotional support. In addition, members of this team were sent from one of two other ski school locations on the mountain and were therefore able to provide an alternative perspective of the children's experiences in two different settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002).

Parents. Upon completion of their child's ski school experience, I asked parents or guardians to complete a brief questionnaire. The purpose of this document was to gain the parents' perception of their child's experience in the ski program. Although only a few parents returned the questionnaire, which rendered the process useless, this exercise did afford an opportunity to chat with parents and, on occasion, gain their perception through casual conversations. Please see appendices for a copy of the questionnaire (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis: Recording, Managing, and Analyzing Data Resources

Data collection for this study encompassed a period of 1 month, from January 2, 2006 to January 29, 2006. Originally, this process was to include 4 weeks of data collection. Each week was to include 5 participants and encompass 5 days of instruction that would have commenced on Monday and concluded on Friday. Unfortunately, the site where I was granted access to conduct this research at the resort was quiet in comparison to the two alternative locations. Due to fluctuations in the number of students enrolled in the destination program at this location, as well as the number of days enrolled, I had to revise the proposed schedule. For this reason, I worked with some participants for only a day, while others I worked with up to 4 days. None of the participants attended the full five days. In addition, because of administrative issues, each week I worked with one instructor for four consecutive days and then with another instructor for the fifth day.

The method of data analysis employed was based on Moustakas's humanistic approach and encompassed three levels of analysis, discussed in Chapter Two (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The first process involved "describing" the data; the second, provided an explanation of the findings, while the third level, concluded with an interpretation, and ultimately, an attempt to uncover what it meant for a young child 'to become a skier' (Moustakas, 1994). Ultimately, the data collected for this research do not reflect the experiences of all children who participate in a full day alpine ski lesson. They reflect the experiences of the children who attended ski school during the period from January 2-29, 2006.

Description began during data collection, with the compilation of field notes detailing my observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Casual conversations with the participants, the instructor, support staff, and, in some cases parents, provided a rich source of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The process of analysis consisted of three methodical readings of the transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). The first, to familiarize myself with the data; the second, to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning conveyed by underlying key words, phrases or relevant quotes, and the third, to employ specific descriptor words, or "units of meaning," to identify and describe emergent themes (Moustakas, 1994). I then compiled a summary sheet for each transcript and composed a specific set of "inclusion rules" to explain recurring themes and to distinguish betweens themes and sub-themes. Once completed, I organized these themes and their respective subordinate themes under broad categories. Finally, the interpretive phase of this process involved relating the findings to extant theory. These interpretations are supported by the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Because the ski school's enrollment schedule was varied and participants attended ski school from 1 to 4 days, I revised my data collection techniques while in the field (Patton, 2002). With limited time to interact with the participants, I selected one or two of the activities proposed to facilitate rapport. Although painting and drawing were valuable in that these provided visual cues to signal either further probing of the observational data, or of the participants themselves, I most often engaged the participants in playful conversation (Moustakas, 1966; Solmon & Carter, 1995). When time permitted, I compared and contrasted field notes to identify themes. Additional notes were made to probe those participants who seemed more proficient at relaying their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Methodological Rigor

Thick Description. Patton (2002) explained that, "rich, thick description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting" and added that, "good description takes the reader into the setting being described" (p. 437). Throughout the process of data collection, I kept detailed notes of what occurred in the research setting and how participants reacted to their environment as well as to those who shared and contributed to this environment.

Triangulation. The multi-modal approach to data collection not only allowed "for triangulation of the findings across the different methodologies," such as casual conversations, observational and documentary data, but also within methodologies (Clark, 2004, p. 144). More specifically, I employed art, play and storytelling to facilitate conversations with participants and to elicit information related to their experience in the ski lesson. Data obtained through the exchange of dialogue were supported by semi-structured observations, debriefing sessions with the instructor, and support staff (Cartwright & Cartwright, 1984; Clark, 2004; Patton, 2002). Nevertheless, despite the variety of methods employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collected, the outcome of this research ultimately depended on my ability to develop and maintain rapport with both the participants and the instructor (Patton, 2002).

Reflexive Journal. I kept a reflexive journal to document my thoughts and feelings as these related to the data (Patton, 2002). The reflexive journal was an important part of the data collection process for it allowed me to embrace my subjectivity without compromising the descriptive quality of the raw data (Patton, 2002). To maintain unity and coherence, journal entries and field notes were compiled simultaneously using a word processor.

Although the general tone of the manuscript is relatively formal to suit the intended audience, a narrative style, characteristic of the phenomenological tradition, was employed where appropriate (Creswell, 1998).

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this research was twofold: first, to gain a deeper understanding of a young child's experience in a full day, destination alpine ski lesson; second, to employ a multi-modal approach to data collection, that provided both a rich and diverse source of data, while at the same time, contributed to the young child's learning experience.

Chapter 4 encompasses my interpretations of the data, conveyed through the instructors', the children's, as well as my own voice. Quotations from transcripts, field notes and journal entries will therefore breathe life into this narrative. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides a detailed description of the research setting, as I perceived it on December 28, 2005. In addition, this section addresses the issues I encountered during the first week of data collection. The second section encompasses the remaining three weeks of fieldwork, considers the experiences of two ski instructors in particular, and provides their perceptions of the learning environment. The third and main section, Becoming a Skier, provides my developing insight into a young child's experience in a full day alpine ski lesson. A narrative that weaves various perspectives of the children's experiences conveys this information. Although the children's experiences remain the focus of this section, my interpretation of the instructors' perception of this experience provides the thread that binds the story from beginning to end. As a result, you will witness what it may have been like for a group of children to become skiers at a destination alpine ski resort during the period that data collection encompassed. More specifically, you may gain a deeper understanding of how a child-centered, experiential approach to ski instruction that incorporated stories, puppetry, as well as free play not only contributed to the participants' learning experience but also the relationship forged with the instructor.

Chapter 5 relates the interpretations outlined in Chapter 4 to the body of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. More specifically, this discussion considers the relevance and significance of relational learning to early childhood ski instruction in specific; addresses the implications of my role as a researcher, considers the trustworthiness of the findings, addresses the strengths and limitations of the study, highlights gaps in the literature, provides recommendations for future research, and addresses the implications of this research.

The Research Setting

It was late in the afternoon when I stepped off the Greyhound on December 28, 2005. Nestled in a forest of towering Douglas firs, below snow-capped peaks, was a small ski village, the backdrop for this research. Although newly constructed, the buildings were reminiscent of what one would expect to find in a European ski resort. Condo-style hotels, with overhangs that met the ground and pretty gable windows, flanked either side of the main artery from the parking lot to the base of the mountain. Overcome by the magnitude of the mountains, *I wondered how a young child may feel upon arrival. Would she note the physical surroundings or would she be preoccupied with her immediate environment; her family, her belongings, and the hotel? Although I am familiar with and respect the mountains, as an adult, I still feel tiny and vulnerable whether standing on the peak or valley floor.* (Reflexive Journal: 28-12-05).

I quickly scanned the village and spotted the ski school to my right. I suspected the convenient location of the bus stop was no accident. To my left, a footbridge provided access across the main road. I crossed the bridge and began my pilgrimage to the base of the mountain. Although effortless in my hiking boots, *I wondered how a young child may perceive the walk* (Reflexive Journal: 28-12-05). The base of the mountain, where the main ski out merged with the village, was surprisingly narrow, only a few hundred feet wide. Rooted to the spot, I shifted my gaze upward to the bright green gondolas that dangled above and seemed to blend in with the surrounding trees. Through the low-level cloud that hovered at mid-station and threatened precipitation in one form or another, I caught a glimpse of the peaks that loomed above. As I lowered my gaze toward the right of the gondola, I noticed a small area cordoned off for "Ski School Use Only." I observed how stark the empty space appeared in the fading afternoon light. *I wondered if the pitch of the small slope would appear steep to the young beginner skier. From experience, the children rarely expressed trepidation when introduced to the beginner area. Or did I fail to notice if they did? Observing the site as a researcher, I am more aware of the potential impact of the physical environment. As a ski instructor I took for granted that the children would be comfortable. Am I overanalyzing the situation?* (Reflexive Journal: 28-12-05). It was early in the season. The terrain would become more forgiving with each additional snowfall.

To the left of the area was the "magic carpet," a black rubber conveyor belt that transported skiers up the small slope. A few bright blue bamboo poles, strategically placed to mark a lively creek, flanked the right side of the slope. Deep ruts, carved into the slushy, soiled, corn snow were evidence of a busy day. I visualized the scene that may have unfolded earlier: Children, dressed in brightly colored ski suits with disproportionate size heads dotted the slope. At the top of the magic carpet, and off to the right, a group of children waited impatiently for their turn to descend. Meanwhile, others lay crumpled in small piles on the snow with their skies in positions that only a contortionist should perform. At the base of the small slope, and to my left, a second group of children lay on their backs making snow angels while a few others stared blankly into the distance. A combination of cheering, chattering and wailing permeated the scene.

As I retraced my steps to the village, I sensed the energy and excitement of the day. The neatly cobbled pathways were crowded with tired, but enthusiastic, skiers sharing their adventures. I spotted the ski school building ahead and smiled at the sight of tiny skis, scattered around the entrance.

It was getting dark as I pulled the heavy glass door open, a feat as I stood five foot six inches tall and on a solid footing. I proceeded into the registration area, which, from years of experience, seemed too small for its intended purpose. Although the building was deserted, the distinct smell of wet ski boots hung in the air. As I scanned the sales desk, looking for a bell to alert staff of my arrival, a young man wearing a black uniform and clutching a red ski-doo helmet appeared. I quickly introduced myself and stated the purpose of my visit. Nat nodded and smiled, stating he would inform Stacey of my arrival. I continued to scan the small room as I waited for Stacey to appear. A messy whiteboard, that looked as though it had relayed messages to parents and staff throughout the day, hung behind the tall desk. The desk, comfortable standing height for an adult, was wide enough to accommodate a computer monitor and perhaps a couple of sales clerks. I scanned the room until I came upon a poster of a serious looking child wearing several layers of winter gear. The poster was reminiscent of an anatomy diagram with labels identifying different layers of clothing. If worn, the pinpointed item promised warmth to the prescribed area. *I wondered how many parents noticed the poster with its intended message. I interpret the poster as a subtle, yet clever marketing strategy, promoting the merchandise in the retail shops that abound. I wonder how many parents react to this carefully staged piece of advertising* (Reflexive Journal: 28-12-05).

Next to the desk was a large pile of skis, ready to be re-stocked. A few pairs of ski boots cluttered the floor between the rows of benches that divided the small room. Behind, and perpendicular to the benches, was a doorway above which a colorful sign asserted, “Parent Free Zone.” Although the room beyond was dark, a brightly painted mural was visible. Silhouettes of small chairs, inverted upon round tables, beckoned from the depths of the room. A few minutes later Stacey, the assistant manager, appeared and greeted me with a warm smile. She asked me to follow her down the narrow corridor to the tiny windowless office she shared with the three supervisors who worked under her. Once we discussed the details of the study and reviewed the instructor, parent and participant consent forms, Stacey offered a tour of the facilities and the early childhood room where the study would be conducted.

In contrast to the reception area, the room was a good size, with large windows that faced east toward the base of the mountain. A perimeter of blue cubbies formed an enclosure where the children congregated during their lunch and snack breaks. Fluorescent green racing vests, laid out to dry, cluttered the tops of the cubbies. In a small area tucked away to the right, and along the bank of windows at the front of the room, was the "den," where distressed or tired children could rest. A pair of partitions separated the tiny room that measured approximately six feet long by five feet wide, while a blue mat and a few well-loved blankets covered the floor. In a corner, a box of tired looking toys promised entertainment. The den looked as though it may accommodate two or three children at most; on a busy day, fifteen to twenty children may attend ski school. *I wondered how a child may perceive this area. From experience, those who take refuge will likely either be too tired or too distraught to notice the cramped, uninviting space* (Reflexive Journal: 28-12-05).

On the wall opposite the den was a small counter, about one and a half foot wide by two and a half feet long with cupboards above and below. Stacey opened the cupboards for my inspection and commented on the lack of craft supplies. In a moment of awkward silence, she offered to order whatever materials I may require. I thanked her and we quickly moved on to the restrooms, located beyond the cubbies. These were clean but cluttered with an array of mismatched stools. I tried to imagine the children climbing up to the toilet, snow pants bunched around their ankles as they balanced on one foot. As though reading my mind, Shelly asserted that the building, with the exception of the washrooms, was designed to accommodate young children.

We concluded our tour with a visit to the cafeteria, where pre-paid lunches were prepared for the children. The cafeteria included a stainless steel counter where kitchen staff organized trays of food. Along the wall to the right was a set of stainless steel shelves, lined with grey buckets where dirty dishes were stacked and then wheeled into the kitchen to be washed. The area was only a few steps from the four-foot high perimeter of cubbies that segregated the early childhood room from the junior program. I surveyed the bright space with its neatly lined rows of picnic tables and envisioned the room filled with children, buzzing with noise.

Week 1: January 2-6, 2006.

The sun was breaking above the mountain peaks when I returned to the research site on the morning of January 2, 2006. The air was crisp. Clouds rushed across the sky and although visibility was clear from creek to peak, winds in the alpine were gusting evident by the wispy trails of snow that whipped around the mountain tops. In the valley, skiers crowded the village, some with steaming cups of Starbuck's coffee in hand, others bogged down by their shiny new equipment.

I was early, so I strolled over to the terrain garden where the on-hill portion of the lesson would unfold. I watched quietly as the neatly groomed area began to take shape. Two employees, wearing black uniforms to distinguish them as support staff, unrolled a length of artificial turf, approximately 10 feet long and 3 feet wide. The mat provided traction and facilitated the children's climb to the top of the small, beginner slope. From a trailer parked to the right of the gates that enclosed the base of the slope, another employee unloaded an assortment of bamboo poles, dressed as sunflowers, and a few brightly colored cushions. Once emptied, I was able to detect a pair of benches. Clear plexi-glass canopies offered shelter from rain or snow, while a heavy chain hitched across the back served as a makeshift gate.

As I glanced around, I caught sight of a clock in the lift hut located to the left of the terrain garden and decided to head back to the Ski School. Upon arrival, I met Stacey at the main entrance where she stood greeting parents and children as they arrived. She quickly introduced me to Heather, the instructor assigned to work with me. Heather had light brown hair, blue eyes and was a bit timid. Later, I learned that she was 23 years old, had completed the third year of an Arts degree and had skied at the resort since she was a young child. As a child, she skied primarily with her father. In fact, her first ski lesson included the training she received for her CSIA Level 1, a designation she recently earned. Although Heather had been snowboarding since she was 11, she returned to skiing because she perceived there were greater employment opportunities for ski instructors. Consequently, this was Heather's first experience instructing ski lessons to young children. Moreover, she had limited experience working with the preschool age group. After we discussed the details of the study, Heather read and signed the participant consent form. We agreed I would assist for the first few days while Heather adjusted to my presence and I became familiar with her instructional approach. Although I was eager to initiate data collection, I decided it was essential to establish rapport with Heather.

My initial perception of Heather was that she was a pleasant young woman but somewhat disinterested in her work (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06). For example, while we chatted that first morning, Heather did not pause to greet a father and his son who arrived a few minutes ahead of schedule. Nor did she acknowledge the boy when his father departed. Instead, she continued to chat and organize her gear. Meanwhile, the boy sat quietly at one of the small round tables, his expression hidden beneath his ski gear. It was not until 8:45 a.m., as she gathered up her gear that she addressed the boy and asked him to join us. Leroy was one of Heather's students. *I wonder how Leroy perceived the situation. I was surprised by and disappointed with Heather's dismissive behavior and the lack of rapport between instructor and student* (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06). The incident with Leroy immediately heightened my awareness of Heather's capacity to relate to her students and the reactions elicited as a result.

I assisted Heather by accepting skis and backpacks from parents. The task afforded the opportunity to introduce myself to each of the children as well as to explain the nature of the study. Once all the children assigned to her group had arrived, we waited patiently for the train to take us over to the beginner slope. Heather sat quietly on the low wall that enclosed the covered area adjacent to the ski school building. I notice that she engaged in conversation only when asked a direct question. When the train arrived, we piled in. Heather instructed the children to keep their hands inside the at all times. Several instructors, in the trailer ahead, sang Old MacDonald had a Farm. Heather remained silent, her eyes fixed on the route ahead. *I wonder how the children perceived Heather. I believe they picked up on her disinterest and cool demeanor, which may account for the reserved manner that prevailed among the group* (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06).

Although she worked efficiently through the progression from walking in ski boots, to gliding on one ski, to maneuvering with two skis, Heather's approach was mechanical and, inevitably, the children lost interest. Heather addressed the issue by asking the group to side step up to the top of the green mat that ascended the lower part of the small slope. The task of assisting the children over to the mats and organizing them in single file took approximately 10 minutes. A few children required assistance, so I held their hands for additional support as they made their way to the top. I also helped those who fell over or slid back down the slope. The task of sidestepping took approximately 10 minutes. When all five children reached the top, lined up, ready to go, Heather returned to the bottom. I remained at the top to assist those who encountered difficulties maneuvering their skis, who fell over, or who unintentionally released a boot from their bindings. Although I was busy assisting the children, I was aware of Heather's silence. *I wonder whether the children picked up on it. I wished she would offer an encouraging or reassuring word. As this was my first day, I made a concerted effort to refrain from commenting. Nevertheless, I felt uncomfortable with Heather's approach.* (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06).

All five children clambered back up for a second descent. After an additional go, two girls opted to play in the snow. Next, Heather suggested we go up the "magic" or moving carpet. Because the base of the lift was located on a plateau above the green mats, a short but steep climb, we removed the children's skis and carried them up to the top. While making the short climb to the base of the lift, snow pack formed under the children's boots rendering the task of putting their skis on more difficult.

The first run down the slope was chaotic. Heather asked the children to organize themselves behind her in a single file. Although the group had skied together before the Christmas holidays, the children appeared to lack the skill and coordination required to stop and turn on demand. Consequently, they were unable to maintain their position and crashed into one another. Moreover, two of the children required a great deal of physical support. Initially, Heather worked with one while I worked with the other. Because they were so unsteady, she suggested we assist the children by allowing them to ski between our legs. After a few runs, we were able to reduce the amount of physical support by skiing backwards, and holding their hands to support them. This technique worked well as it enabled us to maintain eye contact while providing verbal cues. Meanwhile, the other children happily completed circuits on their own, sometimes racing one another to the bottom of the small slope. Despite the chaos and lack of control, the children seemed to enjoy themselves, evident by their screams and laughter. Initially, the two girls who required the most assistance gained their balance and though unsteady, by the end of the morning were able to descend on their own. The children continued to ski until approximately 11:30 a.m. when the train arrived to take us back to the ski school for lunch.

Lunch afforded a bit of down time for the children who chatted away with each other as they ate. I sat watching Leroy, the little boy who arrived first, and realized he looked very familiar. In an attempt to draw him out, I asked whether he had any siblings. He said that he had two brothers, one older, one younger. Much to my surprise, his older brother's name was Lenny. I quickly pulled out my laptop and loaded a photo of a young boy who would have been about Leroy's age when I took the photo six years earlier. The boy in the photo was Lenny, Leroy's older brother. Curious to see what we were doing, the other children soon gathered around the computer and asked questions about the pictures. Another child expressed that he thought it was strange to bring a computer to ski school. The comment was valuable for it provided an opportunity for me to explain my presence.

When the children lost interest, I put my computer away and with Heather's permission, asked the group if they would like to paint a picture depicting their morning. The group was enthusiastic about the activity and although initially they employed brushes and foam stamps, their attention soon shifted and they began to finger paint instead. Their uninhibited laughter and their reluctance to wash up after producing three paintings each indicated they enjoyed the activity. Although pleased to observe the children enjoying themselves, I was disappointed the activity had not afforded an opportunity to discuss their perceptions of the morning session. Instead, the children were intent on transforming their blank sheets into a series of muddy brown masterpieces. *I wondered whether I was expecting too much for this age group. My initial thoughts are that the activity was worthwhile for it gave the children some reprise from the serious atmosphere that prevailed throughout the morning.* (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06).

After we washed up, Heather asked if I had any suggestions for the afternoon session. I thought for a moment then enquired whether the children were familiar with the game 'red light, green light.' Although they were, they were not familiar with the song that accompanied the game so we made ourselves comfortable on the outdoor cushions and practiced the verses several times together. I then suggested Heather lead the group down the slope and the children follow, responding to the words of the song. These required the children to either, slow down (orange light), stop (red light) or go (green light). Although Heather provided the cues, the children did not engage in the game. *I wondered whether the students sensed Heather's lack of enthusiasm. I was disappointed because the children were keen to sing and I think the activity may have worked well had Heather been more supportive* (Reflexive Journal: 01-02-06). The group completed two more runs before Heather announced it was time for a gondola ride. I was pleased to hear Leroy sing as he glided toward the gondola station.

Unable to accompany the children, I returned to the village and found a quiet spot at Starbucks where I set up my computer and documented the events of the afternoon. I returned to the base of the gondola at 3:00 p.m. to greet the group as they descended and to assist Heather during the ride back to the ski school. The children boarded the train in relative silence and the topic of conversation during the short ride back to the ski school centered on going home. When we arrived, a group of parents had already begun to gather. I stood back and watched as Heather greeted parents and shared bits and pieces of their children's day. She smiled occasionally. When the last student departed at about 3:30 p.m., Heather expressed relief. Since this was our first day and I sensed that she was eager to get going, I did not ask whether Heather was willing to participate in a debriefing session.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday unfolded much the same as Monday. Moreover, Heather informed me on Thursday that she would be taking the children up the gondola to ski and would not return until the end of the day. This new development was problematic. Although I was able to secure a day pass, I did not have access to the lifts on a regular basis. Of greater importance, I had been unable to establish rapport with Heather and data collection was not unfolding as anticipated. With the realization that I may lose a week's worth of data, I approached Michelle, the supervisor to discuss an alternative arrangement. Hesitant at first, she suggested I discuss the matter directly with the mini instructors. Fortunately, I had chatted informally with the other instructors during the week I worked with Heather, so the group was familiar with my research. Nevertheless, the task of finding a suitable candidate proved more difficult than I anticipated: Although most of the young women were keen to participate in the study, several had no ski instructing experience and one had never skied before her first day of employment.

Weeks 2 – 4: January 9-29, 2006

After meeting with all eligible ski instructors, I recruited Sally who was not certified and had no previous ski instructing experience. Although her experience working with children was limited to coaching netball to adolescents and instructing English as a second language to preschool children, Sally was a skier herself.

In addition to her uniform, and to differentiate herself from the other women, Sally wore a grey wool toque that partially covered her straight, shoulder length jet-black hair. She had lively green eyes, a warm smile and stood about five feet three and half inches tall. Despite her small stature, her distinct accent pierced the air and conveyed her 'no nonsense' attitude. Although business-like with the children, Sally had a firm yet gentle way about her. Moreover, she was open to new ideas and created opportunities for me to speak with the children: "So we're all going to listen to Kate just for a minute before we catch the train, okay? Let's all listen to Kate's story" (I1: 01-14-06, p. 2). Of equal importance, Sally shared her journey of becoming a ski instructor. *The opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Sally's experience at the outset of the project afforded insights that not only enriched my understanding of the children's experience, but also contributed to my experience of becoming a researcher. I wondered to what extent her lack of relationship with management contributed to her candid nature* (Reflexive Journal, 01-27-06).

Becoming a Ski Instructor

Intrigued by her lack of work experience and qualifications as a ski instructor, I was curious about Sally's experience during her first few weeks of employment. More specifically, I wondered how her experience may have impacted that of her students.

When I asked about this period, Sally responded that she was preoccupied with "just making it through the day" (I1: 01-29-06, p. 10). Moreover, she added that, "My first day was my shadow day with Abby. I didn't have any training prior to that. I was chucked in, straight in and yeah, that was probably where I learned to teach, from Abby that first day" (I1:01-29-06, p.2).

Abby, the "senior" instructor referred to by Sally had neither taught a ski lesson, nor skied prior to this shadow session. Abby shared her perception of this experience: "On my FIRST DAY, I had somebody [Sally] shadowing me [laughs] on my FIRST DAY . . . Yeah, [I had] NEVER [taught on my own] and I had somebody watching me doing the job" (I2: 01-27-06, p. 11). In addition, she added:

> I can remember being told my first day to put my skis on because "you can't expect children to have their skis on if you don't have yours on," which, you know, is fine but it was my FIRST day and I had NEVER, EVER, EVER taught skiing in my whole life and I couldn't even ski myself. (I2: 01-27-06, p. 12)

Concern related to lack of training/experience. Unlike Sally, Abby possessed experience as a nursery teacher in the UK. She explained that her qualifications are equivalent to those of a Canadian elementary school teacher (I2: 01-27-06, p. 1). Although she was accustomed to and comfortable working with young children, Abby admitted she struggled with the task of becoming a ski instructor and expressed feeling frustrated:

> I would have loved to see them come out and say, "Hey, you know this is a great game to play" or "let me lead the game and we'll do this" or "this

> is a really good way to teach kids" or "have you ever thought about doing it this way?" Just showing us a few ways that they've done it, BECAUSE THEY'VE GOT THE EXPERIENCE; they have more experience than any of us. (I2: 01-27-06, p.13)

When I enquired about opportunities for training and personal development, Sally mentioned a workshop related to ski instruction with children (I1: 01-29-06, p. 5). However, due to her work schedule, Sally had completed six weeks of employment before she had an opportunity to attend the course. Consequently, she gained most of her skills on the job, through trial and error:

> My first few weeks I didn't know what I was doing, it was hard. I was watching other instructors, going, 'Awe, so you put your hands on your knees, awe.' I had no idea. Perhaps that was my lack of training before I stepped into the job, but yeah it was significant I would say. (I1: 01-25-06, p. 18)

When I asked about Sally's understanding of what an early childhood ski lesson encompassed, she explained that initially she thought a full day lesson equated to a full day of skiing. Moreover, she shared that she had a limited understanding of the physical or mental capabilities of preschool children and suggested that,

> The expectations for the day, for that specific age group [3 and 4 years] would have been great, you know? That they're not here necessarily to ski the entire day; it's not going to happen, but just to cater to their needs, to keep them, you know, keep them occupied, to keep them happy, keep them loving skiing rather than, yes, someone [like myself] that came in

> and was somewhat of a bit of a "let's go skiing today" and it was not going to happen. And had that been explained or had I thought about it a bit more, then yeah, perhaps my approach would have changed right from the start. (I1: 01-29-06, p. 7)

Following up on her final statement, during our exit interview, I enquired how Sally perceived her approach had changed since her first few weeks of employment. She expressed the following:

> Um, well [I'm] probably more positive this month [January 2006] than December. And so I'm more confident and maybe because I've had you around, but yeah I suppose it took a while to get my head around what we were doing and what we were trying to, and yeah, ultimately the outcome, the children's day, just to make sure they're happy, because I suppose before it was probably more about skiing for me, it was more skiing focused rather than keeping their needs happy, so that's changed somewhat [laughs]. (I1, 01-29-06, p. 1)

Throughout the month that data collection encompassed, I often wondered what the children's experience would have been like during that initial period, when Abby and Sally struggled to define themselves as ski instructors. I therefore probed, during our final debriefing session, how Sally perceived her role influenced the experience of those children who attended at the start of the season. Sally was quick to respond: "the experience for those kids would have been, [pause], terrible" (I1: 01-29-06, p. 10).

In contrast, when asked to compare her perception to that of the children with whom she most recently instructed, after six weeks of experience on the job, she expressed the following:

> Generally speaking they have [a good experience], there have been times I suppose where their day goes in a bit of a slump, yeah, but the majority of their day I'm sure they, they come out happy at the end. They've probably accomplished something which is good I suppose. Everyone likes to see that or feel like they've done something, they've done something constructive during the day. Yeah, they can do a craft for the day and show mom and dad or talk about it later, so I think, I think, yup, on the whole, a good day. (I1: 01-29-06, p. 12)

When I first became aware that a number of the instructors were not qualified ski instructors, I wondered, *"How can these individuals wear the uniform and be called 'ski instructors?"*(Reflexive Journal, 01-09-06). In the after glow of fieldwork, I wished I asked if wearing the uniform influenced how Sally and Abby perceived themselves and their role.

Concerns related to the children's experience. Although Sally acknowledged that her experience as a ski instructor ultimately contributed to and shaped her students' experiences of becoming skiers, she expressed that at times, the constraints imposed by the task of ski instruction and the intent to make the children's experience 'memorable', were difficult goals to achieve simultaneously. For example, she explained that after establishing rapport with a group of children for two days, she found herself re-assigned to a new group on the third day. From her perspective, the sudden change of instructor was disruptive for both herself, and the children:

> It's bad for me cause I would have liked to see [the children] progress too, over the day . . . so I missed out on a piece of that and I suppose they then have to get use to Jenny or whoever it was that, she has a different way of doing things than what I do I'm sure so then, maybe you lose a bit in that day. Jenny's fine, but you lose a bit from what we were working on the day before . . . and it's all new. And the kids are spinning. A new person, it's a little bit, a little bit odd, but yeah, in that respect I think it was bad.
> (I1: 01-16-06, p. 5)

I had the opportunity to observe the children in question and observe their reaction to this change of instructor. I made the following comment, during a debriefing session with Sally, which conveyed my perception of how this sudden change influenced Jimmy's mood:

> Jimmy, who was a happy, well adjusted little guy, was very upset. That really threw him that he wasn't going to be with you. He didn't want to ski and he kept asking lots of questions about why he wasn't with you, because he could see you, so why couldn't he be with you?
> (I1: 01-16-06, p. 6)

Concerns related to the structure of the program. Although maintaining continuity with students was not an issue for Abby, who instructed local children in a club program, she believed the structure of the day influenced the children's experience. More specifically, she felt the daily schedule was unrealistic. Because the distance between the ski school and the beginner slope was prohibitive enough to require transportation to and from the area, the journey varied from ten to twenty minutes in either direction. On most days, this rendered the prescribed schedule impractical:

> You get given this typical schedule of the day, but it doesn't really work that way cause they say 10:15 to 10:30 a.m. go back in and have a juice break and bathroom break. It probably takes at least AN HOUR AND A HALF [laughs] . . . at least [laughs] so we kind of just, kind of have to work things out. (I2: 01-27-06, p.13)

Although Sally attempted to make effective use of down time while waiting for the train, she explained that the children quickly lost interest. For example, one little boy exclaimed: "I want to blow my whistle. I want to blow my whistle until that train comes because it is taking a long time for me. We have to blow our whistles because the train is not coming" (I1: 01-14-06, p. 7).

When I asked about her overall perception of the children's program, based on her professional experience, Abby asserted, "Well, it is very different from what I'm use to [laughs]. I would never expect the children to follow such a structured lesson. It goes against everything I've been taught and everything I believe" (I2: 01-27-06, p. 2). More specifically, Abby explained that at the school where she taught,

> The philosophy is that children should not be made to sit and follow a structured lesson plan. In fact, they are free to go outside any time they like they can do a variety of things from playing with blocks to drawing. (I2: 01-27-06, p. 2)

Pat, who held a degree in Education and Learning Theories, as well as a post-graduate diploma in Early Childhood Management, had worked as a ski patrol, ski instructor and, at the time of data collection, was a childcare provider at the ski school daycare on weekends. In addition, his full time job encompassed Daycare Supervisor at a nearby University. Pat shared Abby's perspective and expressed ideas about providing preschool age children with a "snow experience" rather than a formal lesson (SS1: 01-27-06, p. 10). However, he asserted that the program should strive to facilitate both the children's, as well as their parents,' understanding of what the ski school environment encompassed (SS1: 01-27-06, pp. 9-10). From experience, he believed such an approach would facilitate the child's adjustment and possibly contribute to the experience of becoming a skier:

> If they [parents] arrived at the resort a day early or sacrificed the first day of their vacation and took the child around, and talked to one of the instructors who is going to be around for four or five days, this might help the children [to adjust] . . . that the parents show them where they're going to ski, where they're going to go up the carpet and the parents just take an afternoon with their child so that the child has a familiar place. I've seen parents come in who do that and it's really useful to their children because they're making the child feel welcome before the morning [drop-off] when there are four or five kids crying and a whole lot of noise.
>
> (SS1: 01-27-06, pp. 6-7)

Helen, who possessed extensive experience instructing young children, in a variety of sport education capacities, asserted that,

> I think its fine [the program] for the kids. Some of the 3 year olds needs a nap, but we have space that they can have a nap and if you, I think if you set your day properly and you have breaks and little things to eat at halfway through [the day] and little things that you have for through the end of the day, you're okay. And when they say they're tired, they're tired. They need to rest. You need to respect that. If you push them, they won't like skiing then. (I3: 01-19-06, p. 3)

Helen concurred, however, that lessons should encompass more than the task of learning to ski: "[Although children] need to learn skiing, it's not all about skiing; it's about behavior, about playing with other kids, about learning how to make friends, learning to share, learning; it's just life" (I3: 01-19-06, p. 10).

In addition to structure, the length and number of consecutive days within the program were also a concern. For example, Pat explained that,

> One of the things with children 3 to 4, is they can't, if they're in a five day program, they really need at least two breaks in that five days and I think that [not only] needs to be [relayed] to the parents, but also built into the program. I found when I was teaching the 3 year olds, they were so tired that they couldn't even get on skis by the third or fourth day. (SS1: 01-27-06, pp. 6-7)

Sally added that the day was too long, even for those children who seemed motivated to learn:

> Robert was great today and he knows the form he's got to have. He knows his pizza. He's always ready to go. He's probably just not strong enough

> yet to hold it, but then his attention span doesn't last through the day, but neither do any of them . . . so you'd love it if they could last eight hours, but there's just no chance. There's no hope. Even an hour for someone who is comfortable and good at skiing, still that's enough. It's just enough. (I1: 01-16-06, p. 1)

She explained that on his third consecutive day, Robert complained his legs were sore and described his state as follows:

> It's Robert's third day today and at lunch time, or a bit after lunch, just watching his eyes and his head and how it was almost hitting the table, but he sort of woke up enough and perhaps freshened up in the cool air so we went up, did one run. He said, "I've had enough' and then didn't want to do anymore. He needed a bathroom stop so we went in and after that he just broke down into tears. "I need to see my mom. I want to go home. I want to lie down. I'm tired." I said, "Alright you can go and lie down. We'll go inside and lie down." "No. I want to see my mom." I said, "Oh, we'll just go back there first and we'll read a story." We got a few pages into the book and out cold. Probably just too much; again, it just reinforces that a day is too much and three and four days, he's going to be a wreck tomorrow. (I1: 01-18-06, pp. 1-2)

According to Natalie, the den mom, had Robert been in a group with four other children, he may have spent a brief spell in the den after which he would have had to join his group and continue to ski (SS2: 01-15-06, p.1).

When I asked whether Sally, Helen and Abby perceived the size of the group influenced the children's experience, the instructors were unanimous in their assertion that five children were too many. When asked what they considered the optimum size of a group, Sally maintained that, "two is perfect" (I1: 01-25-06, p. 19). She offered the following explanation:

> Story time is fine, playing is easy, putting on skis is easy, but I wouldn't go anymore than three. I still love two. But three I suppose, yeah, still gives you that extra person to break it up because if it was just the two brothers today, naw. (I1: 01-25-06, p. 19)

Moreover, she added that in a group of five, children who are initially motivated to learn quickly lose interest when they are kept waiting. For this reason, she asserted, "Groups no bigger than two or three to keep the [children's] attention, to keep them moving. Not to be distracted by five other people that might take up five minutes each. That's not good enough I think" (I1:01-16-06, p. 1). Sally noted that, "even George cried a lot. A lot of times he was crying at the top because he didn't want to wait his turn. He just wanted to keep going and going and going" (I1: 01-14-06, p. 4). Moreover, she observed that once the children became restless, they tended to focus on the negative: "It's enough to get cold. It's enough to get thinking about mom or dad. It's enough to fall over and get hurt maybe. It's enough to get snow up a sleeve" (I1: 01-17-06, p. 1). In contrast, with a group of two or three children, Sally perceived she was able to able to meet their individual needs before a meltdown ensued:

> I had two students, Cal and Robert. Cal was fairly, fairly happy all day I thought. Quite content. Quite eager. Loved to be out there but then he was also able to say, "I've had enough. I don't want to do that anymore." (I1: 01-17-06, pp. 1-3)

When asked to comment on her experience with Cal and Robert, Sally asserted, "It was much more pleasant. It was not frustrating. Lunch was nice. I enjoyed the day. I taught more" (I1: 01-17-06, pp. 1-3). Helen, on the other hand, stated, "the optimum [in a group] is three because two, if they don't get along, is really hard and if you have to take them one by one, the one sitting at the top is bored" (I3: 01-19-06, p. 10). Abby concurred with Helen and explained that, "three is a good number because, it, it makes, it creates a group, with games, stories and things whereas I think two could be just, not enough children" (I2: 01-27-06, p. 8). Pat also agreed that three was an appropriate number, explaining that, "If you were teaching them to ski, three is a good number. Four becomes awkward. Five and six, you just can't do anything" (SS1: 01-27-06, pp. 6-7).

Although Abby agreed that the number of children per group influenced the children's experience, she also expressed concern about issuing progress cards at the end of each session. The following excerpt captures the essence of Abby's concerns:

> If you just glanced at the card, it looked like they could do nothing even though they had actually achieved quite a lot throughout the day but there was nothing to say, you know, "I carried my own skis." I think that is something that is REALLY important or, you know, I don't know, "I was happy playing with my friends" or "We played in the snow" or anything

> like that it was, it looked really negative when you ticked the boxes and I thought, "Oh, my God." (I2: 01-27-06, p. 5)

Moreover, Abby perceived these cards perpetuated and reinforced an outcome orientation among parents:

> You get parents who come in and say, "Well, what level is he?" I honestly didn't know what level he was but I didn't think it was important but they were quite stressed about what level, then they assess their child against these different criteria, but I don't know, I don't think, I don't think that is really that important. (I2: 01-27-06, p. 5)

Abby explained that based on her professional training and practical experience, she perceived the skills outlined on the progress cards were inappropriate for most three and four year old children. More specifically, she described a situation wherein a child was unable to master one of the tasks, restraining himself from blowing his safety whistle:

> One of the [tasks] was, "I know when to use my emergency whistle" and there was the one little boy who kept blowing his whistle and I thought, "Well, what do I put? Do I tick 'no' he doesn't know how to use his emergency whistle?" I mean, that was terrible. He was three and half and of course he doesn't know how to use his emergency whistle.
> (I2: 01-27-06, pp. 6-7)

As an alternative, Abby suggested comments such as,

> "We enjoyed making our craft" and "we loved singing" would be more meaningful to the child, and might [also] be something that the child would then be able to talk about with their parents, cause sometimes that's

> the sort of thing that might lead on to a discussion about what happened at ski school. (I2: 01-27-06, pp. 6-8)

Thus, Abby understood that to connect with their experience, it was important for the children to share what they had learned with their parents. Her final comment hints at her overall frustration with the progress cards:

> But I don't know when you're supposed to fill in these comment cards anyway [laughs] whilst you're picking them up off the ground, wiping their noses, while in the other hand, you have their cards, filing in their progress and ticking off the boxes? (I2: 01-27-06, pp. 7-8)

I wondered what impact the mini slider card may have had on the child's experience had Abby completed and submitted it and whether conveying such information may have added or detracted from this experience. Moreover, I wonder whether providing an 'honest' assessment is worth the risk of undermining a neutral or positive experience.

Concerns related to the influence of instructor's experience. From experience, one of the most challenging positions at a ski school involves working with children ages 3 to 4, the position occupied by some of the untrained, uncertified instructors. Because these children required a great deal of emotional support and physical assistance, the young women with whom I worked initially found the job both emotionally and physically draining. Consequently, Abby asserted that having to work through the day without a lunch break compromised her ability to cope effectively:

> If you are having a bad day with the group and there's no time away from it, like I felt like if I had a terrible day with my kids from school at least I

> knew that at twelve o'clock they were out the door and I could just sit there, in silence, and just gather my thoughts and the afternoon was so much better, but it's just like the fact that it just gets worse and worse and worse and worse [laughs]. Whereas if you knew you would just have ten minutes a day, ten minutes time out, to think about what you're going to do for the rest of the day and then you, you, you get nothing. Yeah which I think makes it much harder for everybody. I think everybody would be a lot more motivated if it was a more positive [experience]. I mean, nobody is asking for an hour lunch break or anything, maybe ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the afternoon. (I2: 01-27-06, pp.16-17)

Despite their frustration, none of the women quit during the month that data collection encompassed. Just as they shared a lack of experience instructing ski lessons, these women also shared compassion for, and a genuine interest in, the children whom they instructed. Nevertheless, as data collection progressed, I found their eagerness to contribute to, and be a part of the children's experiences, intriguing. With the exception of Heather, all of the young women with whom I worked were visiting from abroad. I wonder whether these relationships served as a substitute for those with family and friends back home. In addition, I wonder whether these young women would have gained the insight and empathy I observed had they shared a more meaningful relationship with management. How may the children's experience of becoming skiers have differed had the instructors been local, certified ski instructors?

Becoming a Skier

We were almost halfway through the month that data collection encompassed when a young boy named Maxim asked: "Why do people go skiing?" (I1: 01-16-06, p.9). Of the 23 children who participated in the study, Maxim was the only child who questioned the rationale of becoming a skier. When we discussed the boy's question during our debriefing session, Sally confided that she was uncertain of the answer herself:

> He said, "Why do people go skiing?" [laughs uneasily] just out of the blue. "Well, because they enjoy it?" I don't know. It's funny, "Why *DO* people go skiing?" It is an odd sport to get out and get cold and you slip down a mountain, which consciously you shouldn't be going down. I thought that was a funny question, "why do people ski?" Ha, well, I don't know. Why do people do this crazy thing? Yeah, it's funny. (I1: 01-16-06, pp. 9-10)

Sally's response which was, in essence, a question, "Because they enjoy it?" merits consideration (I1: 01-16-06, p.10). Initially, I wondered whether Maxim was enjoying his experience of becoming a skier. If so, would he have asked? I searched the transcripts, as well as Sally's journal and my field notes looking for clues. I found nothing to indicate the boy was disgruntled with his experience. Uncomfortable with my wonderment, I pause from writing. I recall a statement by Sparkes (1995) and search the stacks on my desk. The paper is lengthy. I scan the pages quickly, looking for the phrase I recently highlighted. I read it through and then consider my interpretation, an adult's perspective, influenced by a life long passion for skiing. I recognize the intrusion of my assumptions, and, as Sparkes (1995) reiterates, "researchers-as-authors need to indicate their position in relation to the research process and the other people involved" (p.165). I therefore attempt to reconsider the question from the child's perspective. I begin, by trying to imagine the context in which the question was raised: Had the boy been looking up at the mountain, watching skiers swoosh down, intrigued by the utility of the sport. Alternately, had he fallen over, while attempting to navigate his way down the small slope toward his instructor, and asked, in frustration, "Why do people go skiing?" The answer escapes me.

Instructor's approach. With her arms outstretched, Sally smiled and shouted, "Hands on your knees! That's it! Good. *Now* you look like a skier!" (I1: 01-25-06, p. 15). As data collection progressed, the transformation following these last six words became predictable. In most cases, upon hearing these words, a large smile replaced a nervous expression (I1: 01-25-06, p. 15). Then, the child, appearing to stand taller, slowly shuffled to the edge of the green mat and slid down the small slope in one form or another. All the while Sally cheered relentlessly: "Look at you! You're a skier!" (I1: 01-25-06, p. 15).

When I asked how she came up with the idea of providing feedback about the child's form during the first descent, Sally offered the following explanation:

> I think I started saying it when I noticed they would stay in position, hands on knees, ready. I think that's when I started to say, "Yeah, that looks right, perfect let's go." They're just starting; they don't know if they're doing it right, or if they feel right, or if it's right. (I1, 01-25-06, p. 16)

She asserted that her motivational strategy developed from trial and error: [I] probably didn't do it my first few weeks, though. I was probably terrible. But then you see the reaction and you go, "Ah! But now that you can see what encouragement does, you go, "well, just lay it on thick."(I1: 01-25-06, p. 16).

Experiential approach. In addition to the strategies she developed prior to my arrival, Sally agreed to employ an experiential approach to ski instruction. Therefore, instead of focusing on skill progression, the children were encouraged to experience the sensation of skiing immediately. When we discussed the effectiveness of this approach during one of our debriefing sessions, Sally stated the following:

> We had two brothers, 4 and 3. We decided to put the straight on skis this morning and they skied the whole time until they needed toilet break. Only once I heard Carl say, 'I'm finished.' Learning to walk in ski boots is unnecessary. You never, you hardly walk in your ski boots when you're not on the slopes, you hardly walk on one ski ever, unless you've lost one ski on the slopes, so I think it is pointless and it's not fun. It makes much more sense to go straight up even though it makes your morning a bit longer. (I1: 01-25-06, pp.4-5)

Ultimately, the task of mastering the snowplow became more relevant when the children experienced the feeling of skiing *before* learning the basic skills. By introducing "the why before the how," Sally was able to capture her students' interest and, perhaps unwittingly answered the question: "Why do people go skiing?" (Strean & Holt, 2000).

Stories. As part of the requirements for participating in the study, Sally also agreed to include a skiing related story as well as a puppet craft and periods of free play. The purpose of the story was to facilitate conversation with the children while imparting information to help them understand how their day would unfold. The following excerpt begins with Sally reading *My Day at Ski School* to Cory and Robert part of the conversation that unfolded.

S: *My day at Ski School.* See the little person skiing? I don't know if he's got blond hair like you or not. "First, I was fitted for my equipment." Did you go and get your skis this morning? From here? Yeah. Do you know what color your skis are? Are they blue? No, they're not blue. Are they red? Do you know what color they are?

C: They're red.

S: They're red. You know red ones go fast, don't you? "Then I met Sally" Who is Sally do you think? Take a closer look. Do you think that looks like me? A little bit. That's me. Ha, ha. My name's Sally. See? It says up here. S-a-l-l-y. "And I found a special spot." Do you know where our special spot is? This very table. This is where we are going to sit today and we can color, we can have our lunch here. What else? We can make crafts here.

K: Yeah.

S: We do lots of things here. "And I made new friends." See us all there. All 3 and 4-year-olds just like you and me. All waving, having fun. We've all got our skis on. And it's snowing that day. That's a great picture that one. "And we wore lots of warm clothes" Do you know what this is?

R: Clothes?

S: Do you know what it is? Are they your boots? Do you know what it is? That's your jacket. Ski jacket. Yeah. "As well as my ski equipment." Do you know what those are?

C: Skis.

S: Wow, excellent! Do you know what they are?

C: Umm. Ski boots?

S: Yes. Do you know what this is?

R: Mmm.

S: Goes on your head.

R: A helmet.

S: Yeah. Wow, you're good at this. "We are ready to ski." See we get our clothes on later, after we finish coloring in, and we all head up to our ski slope and we go skiing. Here we are, here are the mountains. Are you staying at a hotel? Do you stay in a hotel? Yeah.

(I1: 01-16-06, pp. 2-3)

Abby, who read the same story to her group of students, developed some of the ideas further to convey pertinent information about safety and well-being on the ski slope. The excerpt from Abby's reading of *My Day at Ski School* highlights her skill at developing rapport by acknowledging all the children in her group. In addition, she uses this discussion to gain insight about the children's understanding of the task:

A: I'm just going to put these toys in the box for five minutes. We're just going to read this special story. We need to make sure we use our eyes for looking. Child breaks silence and says with reference to the title page: "It looks like bunnykins." [Giggles]

A: Simon says, hands on head. Molly, are you going to put your hands on your head? Okay, thank you. This is going to be the best story you have ever seen, I'm sure. This story is called *My Day at Ski School* and today, everybody has come to ski school [whispers] and I've come to ski school and Molly's come to ski school and Geoff's come to ski school and we're going to have so much fun. And my name is Abby. Did you know that my name is Abby? I'm your ski instructor today and Emma is going to help today and Kate is going to help today. Let's have um, and you're going to help today too, aren't you Nat? That's right.

Let's see. Wow, look I see the mountains. These are the big mountains outside and look, this is a map, this is a map of this mountain, and can't you wait to go skiing? So when you've been skiing all the time and practiced really hard with your skis you can go up on the gondola with your skis and up to the very top of the mountain and ski all the way down.

L: But we can't ski down!

A: One day you will.

L: No, we can't

A: This is where some of your mommies and your daddies go skiing every day when you come to ski school. They go all the way up here and take lots of different roads and they come out of the trees and we're right down here. This is where we're going to be today. We're going to have a look around the mountain today and see if we can see people skiing down.

L: And maybe we'll, oh and maybe my mom and dad.

A: and yeah, maybe.

L: and I can ski and then I can talk to my mom and dad.

A: That's right we're going to look for them. This is Abby, my ski school instructor, that's me. My name is Abby and I'm your ski instructor and that's when I was outside and we were doing some skiing with some different kids and I am so pleased that all you guys came today to ski school 'cause its so much fun. We're going to go out here and we're going to ride on the green carpet. "I found a special spot and read a story. You guys remember Sally. Sally's a different instructor. She was teaching some of you skiing the other day. And they were reading a really impressive story abut ski school.

L: But I wasn't here.

A: No, you were at home that day weren't you. Now, "Here is my ski equipment." Okay, the first thing that we need when we go skiing is our

L: Our helmet.

A: Our helmet. Who has a helmet today?

L: Everyone.

A: Great! What color is your helmet, Molly?

M: Um black and, and it has stickers on it and I put them all over my helmet.

A: Lovely. And Geoff, what color is your helmet?

G: My helmet is blue.

J: Wow. Jill what color is your helmet? I saw it already. I think it is blue. So here is our helmet. Why do we need a helmet in ski school? What's it for?

L: We have it so we don't get hurt.

A: Right. What might we hurt if we don't wear a helmet?

L: Um, our head.

A: Our head. We might bump our heads. We need a helmet to stop us from bumping our heads if we don't wear our helmet and also our helmets keep our heads very warm. Is your head warm Carl?

C: Yes.

A: That's right. Now the next things we need are our

L: Skis!

A: Our skis. You can't come to ski school without your skis [Children all laugh].

A: Can you? That would be silly. We need to remember our skis.

C: and that would be bad.

A: Yes, that would be very bad because we wouldn't be able to go skiing with our friends. Has everybody brought their skis today? Yes?

L: I brought mine.

A: I'm glad you brought your friends and your skis. Who has got red skis today?

G: Me

A: Geoff, you've got red skis. And you guys have got some blue skis haven't you? What color are your skis Jill?

J: I'm, I'm not sure.

A: You can't remember. What color are your skis, Molly?

M: Black.

A: Wow. And the next thing we need is, here, ski boots. We have to have our ski boots on because they fit into our skis. We couldn't wear regular shoes because they wouldn't stay on. They wouldn't work with our skis, would they? They would just fall off. We have to have our special ski boots on to keep our feet nice and warm and dry and also to fit them in our skis.

J: Look at mine! Mine's black.

A: Very

M: I don't know what color my skis are.

A: Well don't worry I've got them outside. And the last thing we need is

L: Our goggles.

A: and why do we have goggles for? Why do we need to wear goggles?

L: You wear them on your head and so your eyes don't get cold

A: Ah, right! To stop our eyes getting cold and to stop the snow going in our eyes if we are skiing really fast. So when we all learn to ski fast, that means the snow may go in our eyes. So we need all of our ski equipment. Our skis, our helmet, our boots and our goggles and I'm glad we have all of these things because then it means we're ready to go skiing when we have all of those. Here are some clothes that keep us warm. We have our long johns, we have our ski suit, we have our jacket or fleece. Some people have lovely warm socks on and everybody's got gloves or mittens with them today. And we need to keep our hands lovely and warm when we're skiing. And why do we need our mittens? What are our mittens for? What job do our mittens do?

L: They keep our hands warm.

A: They keep our hands lovely and warm. If you put your hands in the snow, then your hands get very cold, very cold and we have to keep our mittens on our hands today so our hands will stay lovely and warm and if you take them out

M: your hands will get cold.

A: Your hands will get very cold. We always keep our mittens on when we're outside, especially today because it is very snowy. "Once we had gone to the washroom," we need to make sure we go to the washroom if we need to go, before we go out skiing. You know what, when we go outside, there are no bathrooms out there and then we have to come all the way back in and it's a really long walk so if we need to go to the washroom, then we can go when we're here where it's warm and nice, then we won't have to come back in and miss out on skiing.

L: Who is she? [Pointing at picture of child and instructor going to the bathroom]

A: That's the ski instructor. Here is the teacher and here is the little kid going to the bathroom before they go out skiing. Let's see what happens. "Once we've gone to the washroom, we were ready to ski." Here we are, everybody's got their helmets on, their goggles, their jackets on, their mitts on, their boots on and their skis, on the picture they have, and they're ready to go outside. They're all ready to go skiing. "We went outside and met, Nat, the driver who drives our train." That's his job he does everyday and he has lots of fun and we get to ride in the train. We're going to go on the train in a minute and Nat will take us all the way over to the ski hill and we'll take our skis too, and he'll drive us there. There's a big engine and all the kids sit to the front, yeah?

C: And then we get to go for a ride in it.

A: That's right, and its lots of fun, isn't it Carl?

C: Sure is. I've been for a ride in it.

L: Who sits there?

A: That's where the driver sits, isn't it?

C: And, and, and, and, and, our hands on our knees

A: That's right. We always put our hands on our knees on the train because if we put our hands out of the train, like this, we might get hurt so we put our hands on our knees when

C: You can do it like this!

A: That's right, we put them in. We just don't put them out the train because they might get hurt out the train, they might get caught, that's right. Please sit down, please sit down Molly. Okay, also we've got to meet Nat. We're going to meet Nat in a minute.

"And Nat took us for a ride on the train." Look there's Carl and Evan and Donatello riding on the train with their teacher Sally.

L: What about me?

A: Well you were at home that day Lindsey. And this is them sitting on the train all ready to go. They have their helmets on, and they have their gloves on

L: When did they go on the train?

A: A few days ago. And here they are sitting on the train and we have to go on the train so that we don't get too tired from walking all the way over there. You see?

C: Dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah [Child humming while Abby continues to discuss the story].

A: We're going to have a ride on this very special train and some of these guys have already been on our train before and Carl has been on the train too, haven't you? "Guess what I did next?" What happens once you've been on the train Carl, can you remember?

C: You go skiing! You do your pizza pop.

A: That's right! They've put their skis on and they've made a pizza shape with their skis. What happens when you make a pizza? What happens when you make a pizza with your skis?

C: It makes you stop!!!

A: That's right! It makes you stop. Why do we have to stop when we're learning to ski?

C: [Unintelligible response]

A: Why do we need to stop?

C: Because you'll fall.

A: Because you would just keep going and going and going and going and going and going and going. You wouldn't be able to stay with your friends and your teacher because you wouldn't be able to stop so this is what we do with our feet [demonstrates] just like this when we want to stop. We make a big pizza. Can you see? Look at my pizza, or a piece of pie or a triangle, just like this shape, just like a piece of pizza, yeah. I like, mmm, pepperoni, what pizza do you like, Carl?

C: [Unintelligible response]

A: And what do you like, Jill?

J: [No response]

A: hmm, what kind do you like, Geoff?

G: [Unintelligible response]

A: And what kind of pizza do you like, Molly?

M: [Unintelligible response]

A: We're going to make some pizzas with our skis today. Can you make pizzas with your skis Molly?

M: [Molly doesn't respond]

E: Yes, I can.

A: and, and you can and of course Carl made a pizza with his skis yesterday when all you guys weren't here, so let's see what happens on the next page. "I skied!" Look at these guys. See, there's Carl doing his pizzas. There's Evan and Donatello doing their pizzas on the green carpet so they weren't sliding anywhere. They were just practicing, lifting their skis just like this [demonstrates], making a big pizza, so they could go sliding. Do you remember that Evan? Do you remember making a pizza?

L: Well where's the teacher?

A: Where's the teacher? The teacher is just down the hill because she's going to catch them at the bottom when they come down. She's just waiting for them. Um, was it easy or was it difficult to make a pizza? Was it difficult to make a pizza? Was easy or was it difficult for you to make a pizza? Do you remember?

C: [No answer]

A: Do you think it is difficult Carl or do you think it's easy? It might be easy. It might be a bit tricky at first but it will be easy when you've done it a few times. These guys went skiing. Let's see, "These are my new friends. Carl and Evan are brothers. They are visiting from Michigan. Who is from Michigan? That's right, you guys. They came all the way from Michigan. Did you come on an airplane?

C: I didn't come from Michigan.

A: Where did you come from Carl?

C: From Seattle.

A: I'm so pleased you've all come to visit. So these are my new friends. "Soon it was time for lunch." So after we've been outside for a little bit of skiing, I said its time for lunch. We all come in here and sit and eat around the table and we have some lemonade and some salad and some grilled cheese or two, and a big…this is good, who knows about, oh that's right, how was it? Was it good? [Pointing at the photo]

G: Mmmm, tomatoes.

A: Look, here's Sally. Is she having some ketchup? I think she's putting ketchup on somebody's lunch and everybody is very happy with their lunch. "After lunch, I made a puppet with skis." Do you remember doing that Carl? Did you make one too? Donatello and Evan did you do one too?

C: Yes.

A: They made a little puppet for their finger and it has ski on it as well.

L: How did you do that?

A: Wow, was it hard work Carl?

M: What, what did they make it with?

A: They made it with material and felt and then they cut them out and then they made, they had glue, and they used the glue to stick all of the pieces together, the when it was dry, they could play with them. They played a little game with them. Did you play a game with them? Did you do a little story with them?

C: Yes

A: He looks really happy, doesn't he? He looks really happy playing with it. "We skied some more." After they made their puppet, they went out on the snow again and they put on their skis and they went up the green carpet and put their skis on and came sliding down with their skis. Carl put his mittens back on, and his helmet back on and his jacket back on and his ski back on and he was ready to go. He was having a lot of fun yesterday. "And at the end of the day we rode the gondola." Here's Sally, she's inside. They went on the gondola. They went for a ride. They were so lucky, they'd done so much skiing and you did so much skiing that you went for a ride on the gondola.

J: When do we go home?

A: "When do we go home?" We'll, I'll show you that after we go to the gondola, after Sally went on the gondola, everyone went home.

"What a great day" Was it a great day Carl? Did you have a great day Carl that day? Looks like it so much fun. I hope we can have a day just as fun as that. Do you think we can Carl?

C: Yes.

A: We're going to have so much fun today. End of the story. So the first thing we did on the story, the first thing they did in the story was make sure they had all their stuff on ready to go outside and then we need to go and meet Nat the driver. So what we're going to do now, guys, is we're going to find our coats and we're going to find our helmets. (I2: 01-27-06, pp. 1-11)

When I Abby and I discussed the children's day during our debriefing session, she made the following comment about beginning and ending her lesson with *My Day at Ski School*:

> I thought that was it great for, for those, it was great for all the kids, for, for the new kids that had never been and for ah, children who had skied but not been to this ski school because the train thing I think being so strange, and this way they know we get on the train and we go from the ski school and come back and I think it was very worthwhile for Evan and, it was nice for them to see, to remember [at the end of the day] that's what they had done and to talk about their experiences and share them with you and the other children and it kind of got them talking about things. It was great to talk about things because I think, um, you can't sit down and have a discussion when they're three you need to have some sort of visual stimulus to talk about that, I think that, that would, would be really good for talking about rules at ski school, for talking about why we wear our bibs or why we wear our mittens and why we shouldn't take our mittens off, I thought that was really good because like I always never know or then it gets to the point where they've taken their gloves off and I have to say, "Ooh, we don't take our gloves off because that's" and I don't think they actually know or think about that before hand so I think to be able to address those things before they, before they happen so they know. I felt it was a really, a really good thing for all of them, for all of the kids to see that story.
>
> (I2: 01-27-06, p. 19)

Free play/puppet play. In addition to the story, periods of free play were interspersed throughout the day at the instructor's discretion. According to Sally, not only did playtime provide opportunities for the children to recharge, but also some autonomy:

> He loved the idea of a free morning. He was the happiest I have ever seen him. Even after we went up the gondola and came back, I said, 'Oh what do you want to do now? Do you want to go make a snowman or ski or what do you want to do?' 'I want to ski.' And I thought, well we've only got fifteen minutes, but he was keen to go skiing, you know, not that he's aware of time. (I1, 01-18-06, p. 5)

Play was not limited to outdoors. The children were also given time to play with a puppet craft they completed after their lunch. In addition to providing a window into the boys' experience, the following conversation also captured Sally interacting with the children during puppet play:

> C: I can make a puppet show with you.
>
> S: Oh, I would like that. What about you Evan? Can you make up a puppet show about, about the puppets?
>
> C: About Beauty and the Beast.
>
> S: Beauty and the Beast, okay. Okay, everyone watching? Let's watch
>
> D: [Says something in Spanish]
>
> S: Okay, when you're ready
>
> D: [Continues to speak in Spanish]
>
> C: I'm thinking. Where do giants come from?
>
> S: Where do who, where do who come from?

C: Where do giants come from?

S: Giants? Do you think there is such a thing as giants? Maybe they live in Giant land.

C: [Response incomprehensible]

S: What stories do you know that have giants in them?

C: Some giants live

S: Some giants live where?

C: in the clouds.

S: In the clouds? Yeah, a bit like Jack and the Beanstalk. Do you know that story?

C: I know that story.

S: You know that story.

C: Let's play the giant story. (I1: 01-25-06, pp.1-3)

The laughter and uninhibited play I observed, and later listened to as I transcribed the tape, was just as much a part of this group's experience of becoming skiers as was the on-hill component of their day. When the boys eventually seemed to tire of make-belief play, I took the opportunity to ask about their on-hill experience. The following excerpt demonstrates how the children employed their puppets to express their understanding of their on-hill experience:

K: Can your puppet, can your puppet tell us what your puppet thought about skiing this morning?

C: Yeah.

K: Yeah? What did your puppet?

C: I'll tell him what I think [Speaks in a pretend voice].

S: Hey Mr. Puppet. Mr. Puppet, Mr. E. Puppet what did you do today?

E: I did [says something indiscernible].

S: What did you have for lunch Mr. Puppet?

E: I had a grilled cheese and, and,

S: Mr. Puppet, did you make, um, shapes with your skis when you were skiing this morning?

E: Yep.

S: What kind of shapes?

E: [Says something indiscernible] shape.

S: What kind of shape?

E: Yay. I made a pizza shape.

K: Ooh, I remember Sarah talking about making a pizza shape, yeah.

S: Carl, does your puppet know what he did this morning? Does he remember? What did your puppet do this morning?

K: Uh-oh, what's happening to your puppet?

C: Uh-oh

S: Uh-oh

C: My little puppet skied backwards.

K: Yeah?

E: How can he ski backwards?

C: [replies but indiscernible].

E: No!

S: Can you put that down, sweetie?

D: Says something in Spanish.

S: No shoes, no shoes (I1: 01-25-06, pp. 4-6)

The following morning, Donatello's mother shared that her son took his puppet to bed and played with it before going to sleep. When I asked her to describe the nature of her son's play, expecting a version of the fantasy similar to that which I observed during the afternoon, she made a skiing gesture with her hand and told me that he said his puppet "was making pizza." I was pleased to hear the mother's story for several reasons; first, interest in his puppet and the display of positive affect while engaging the puppet in the activity of skiing may suggest that Donatello found the experience to be positive. Second, he gained an additional opportunity to share his experience with his mother. And third, by engaging the puppet in ski related maneuvers, Donatello demonstrated his understanding of the lesson in a manner that was personally relevant and meaningful. (Field Note: 01-26-06)

Helen, who embraced the idea of incorporating periods of free play, demonstrated an understanding of her students' capabilities:

> I think at that age, their [time] can't be [structured] all the time. They need you to give them an idea and you let them go with it. If you play a game, it has to be a very simple game, not too much rules, not too much, and very colorful. They have to have a role [in] it. They're not in a group yet. They're all separate minds and they will play in their own minds. Sometimes they will let you in, but sometimes not. Most of the time, they won't, but they'll like hugs and cuddles, and, but, they're really playing

> with themselves; it's very different how they think, but it's good to see, to learn interaction and to let them get free and play. Even like if you let them by themselves in the bank of snow and they'll play for an hour. (I3: 01-19-06, p. 11)

While Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) embedded within a developmentally appropriate framework appeared to contribute to a more meaningful and relevant learning experience, both observational and documentary data support the rationale for employing techniques derived from art, play and narrative therapies to facilitate rapport with the instructor and to promote an understanding of the task prior to engagement.

Parental involvement. Although Sally and her colleagues made every effort to understand and accommodate their young students' needs, they nevertheless encountered children who displayed negative affect. Geoff, for example, was so anxious about his experience at ski school that he became physically ill. According to Sally,

> He cried himself into throwing up. Just unexpected; he was face to face with his dad and his dad was just sort of talking to him, trying to calm him, but he was crying so much that it just went plop, straight over dad… (I1: 01-21-06, p. 27)

When I joined the group later that morning, I was surprised to hear that Geoff had been so upset. Without the background information that Sally provided, from my observations alone, I would have surmised that Geoff embraced the experience from the start.

In contrast, Mason began the day confident and eager to learn then experienced a moment of upset at the unexpected sight of his mother during the lunch break:

> Mom came and knocked on the window at lunch, got him to come over to the window and then just walked straight up the hill and he was shattered. Ran around there and stood at the glass doors bawling for about ten minutes. I didn't even know where he had gone, and there he was just hysterical. His mom didn't stop. She got his attention and then off she went. So that interrupted him, but then he came good after he recovered from that. (I1: 01-14-06, p. 2)

The emotions aroused by the mother's dismissive behavior did not appear to undermine Mason's overall experience, as he was able to regain his composure and carry on with his day:

> I thought he'd be a struggle, but he actually did better than expected, he stuck with it. [I thought] here we go, we're going to have a real tough afternoon, but we didn't. It was good, actually. (I1: 01-14-06, pp. 2-3)

The most distressing example of negative affect related to a young child's ski school experience occurred in Abby's class. In the following excerpt, Abby shares her perception of Charlie's experience:

> I had a boy in adventure camp, on the Monday, whose dad said he wanted to take him up the mountain on Friday, and that was what he said to the child. The child therefore hardly ever put his skis on the whole week because he was so negative about skiing. He kept saying to himself: "I can't do it. I'm so bad at this. I'm so bad I don't want to go skiing." I had never heard a three year old say things like that, but when his dad picked him up, his dad said lots of things to him that were quite negative: "Come

> on, you've got to put your skis on cause on Friday you've got to be able to ski. I'm taking you up the mountain and if you're not going to be able to ski, then you're going to fall down." This kid was a mess because the dad put all this pressure on him. (I2: 01-27-06, p. 3)

Charlie's experience of becoming a skier was the exception rather than the rule. His story exemplifies the delicate nature of the developing self-esteem and the impact his father appeared to have on his ski school experience. Upon hearing Charlie's story, I wondered how a three-year old child would perceive "falling down the mountain," notably the one that towered above him and disappeared into the clouds.

Regardless of her efforts, Abby was unable to reassure Charlie and to help him to overcome his fear of becoming a skier. She explained that:

> I basically spent the whole week just trying to give him some self-esteem to put his skis on. JUST to put his skis on that was like the hardest part. It was really sad to have a child that was, who found it just such a negative experience because of what the, the parents, the pressure that the parents put on them to be able to ski. (I2: 01-27-06, p. 3)

When Abby shared this incident with me, I wondered to what extent the anxiety observed was a stable trait rather than an anxious state induced by the specific task of alpine skiing. Thus, I wondered whether Charlie had demonstrated a similar degree of anxiety and low-self esteem across other settings. Moreover, I wondered if by the end of the week Charlie perceived he had become a skier. Finally, I wondered if his experience would influence his decision to engage in the sport at a later stage.

In contrast to Charlie, Carl and Evan began their journey of becoming skiers in a more positive manner. Upon arrival, while Sally greeted the boys and chatted with their mother, I had an opportunity to chat with the boys' father. He shared that the family had vacationed at the resort the previous winter with the intention of enrolling their eldest son, Carl in the destination program. Unfortunately, it rained everyday. He explained that, "I didn't want to put him in [lessons] because I didn't want him to have a negative experience the first time" (I1: 01-25-06, p. 12). This trip, however, Carl, age 4, and Evan, age 3, were eager to learn to ski despite the inclement weather. Sally stated that, "they got straight on [skis]. They skied a bit in the morning. They were quite keen. In fact, no tears and no real upsets all day with either of them" (I1: 01-25-06, pp. 1-2). Moreover, she added that when they returned later that afternoon, the boys were eager to continue to ski: "They persisted. They fell over. They giggled when they fell over. I think they had been pumped up enough from the day so it was fun regardless" (I1: 01-25-06, p. 12).

As I assisted him up the beginner slope together, Warren, age 3, shared the following comment with me: "I don't like skiing. I got dirt my head." At first I was confused by Warren's statement. To clarify, I asked whether he had ever bumped his head while learning to ski and he reiterated, "Yeah, I don't like skiing" (I1: 01-21-06, p. 20). Later, during our debriefing session, Sally and I discussed the little boy's comment. Although she was under the impression that this was Warren's first ski lesson, we considered the possibility that Warren may have had a negative experience elsewhere. Perhaps his parents had convinced him to wear his helmet by informing him of the potential dangers of falling and hurting his head while learning to ski. On the other hand, perhaps Warren had overheard a sibling make a similar comment and was parroting the idea. Despite his comment that he did not like skiing, Warren never complained about wearing his equipment and continued to learn to ski.

Casual conversations with children. Although stories, free play and crafts were valuable as both methods of data collection and instructional tools, impromptu conversation with and among the children also provided valuable information about the children's ski school experiences and their perceptions of these experiences. The following conversation, initiated by Robert as we waited at the top of the magic carpet, demonstrates that some children will express themselves freely when they feel at ease. While watching skiers descend the slope above and to the left of the beginner area, Robert suddenly exclaimed, "Adults don't ski with children, you know" (I1:01-18-06, p. 3). Initially, I thought it interesting that Robert did not perceive Sally or me as adults. Then I wondered what provoked Robert's comment. Had he based this conclusion on his experience of becoming a skier? Or had his parents provided some sort of rationalization for his attending ski school that he was trying to make sense of? (Reflexive Journal, 01-18-06). I don't have the answer. When I probed Robert further he shifted his attention signaling the conversation was over. When I came across this transcript I felt the comment was important to include but I struggled with how to make sense of it. Sparkes (1995) addresses this problem of "representation" succinctly. He states,

> The crisis of representation remains in the form of a continued questioning of the assumption that qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience. Such lived experience is now taken to be created in the social text by the researcher, which means that the link between text and experience has become increasingly problematic. (Sparkes, 1995, p. 159)

Although I remain unsure of Robert's perception, it is evident that he was trying to make sense of his experience and attach meaning to it which, I think is just as insightful.

While casual conversations with children afforded opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the children's concerns and interests, as these related to the ski school environment, the following conversation underscores the need to be aware of the infringement of adult assumptions:

> K: So who would like to tell me what you did on the green mat?
>
> G: I played with my toys and I came out of the bathtub, my daddy gave me one doll, then I eat a cookie, then go to sleep.
>
> K: Oh! But what did you do out here today? That sounds like something you did at home last night, but what did you do out here, this morning? What did we do this morning?
>
> G: I don't know. (I1:01-14-06, pp.2-3)

The dialogue reveals that I was not listening carefully to the child's response. Instead of recognizing that the manner in which I had framed the question resulted in the answer about the bath mat, I assumed the child misunderstood my question. On the contrary, he took my words very literally. After mulling over his response, I realized that perhaps the bath mat was also green and he was sharing this particular experience with me. The question, therefore, is not whether young children are able to describe their experiences, but rather is the researcher able to frame the questions clearly to elicit the desired information.

Casual conversations among children. A final source of data included casual conversations among children during periods of down time. Sally described a conversation that unfolded in the gondola as her group descended the mountain one afternoon:

> I have no idea just what they were talking about: "I see worms. I've seen worms in my garden and I've seen worms in my mom's car" and just you know silly stuff, but they were all laughing, couldn't stop laughing, no idea, and I didn't participate at all, that was all their own, just laughing. So that was good. (I1: 01-14-06, p. 3)

The tone of the conversation is quite revealing. Although the children make no direct reference to their ski school experience, their capacity to engage in silly talk may indicate that they enjoyed this particular aspect of their ski school experience. I chatted with this group of children when they returned from their expedition up the mountain. When I asked them to describe what they saw, this is what the children shared with me:

> K: Who can tell me what you did when you went up the gondola? Jimmy, what did you do?
>
> N: I saw some skiers, some snow, some trees, some houses.
>
> B: And I saw some worms!
>
> K: Worms?!
>
> N: Worms!
>
> B: We saw worms. For real.
>
> K: For real?
>
> B: No.
>
> K: Snow worms?
>
> B: They're under the ground of the snow.

K: Oh! Do you think they might have been sleeping? Do you think worms might sleep in the winter? What did you think Jason? Was that your first time up the gondola?

B: And we went down the gondola and went down the big, giant mountain.

K: Yeah. Wow! Did you go really high up in the sky with the gondola?

B: Mmm Hmm

K: Yeah. You were able to look down at the people skiing?

B: Yeah.

K: Yeah, you did, you saw...what did you think about that? What did you think when you saw them skiing?

N: They skied like us, but they had poles.

K: Oh, so were they like you but they had poles? Is that something you might want to try?

N: Yeah.

K: Yeah. What did you think Gregory? About the gondola ride?

F: Making a spider.

K: You're making a spider, Yeeh! Oh goodness. Goodness gracious.

[To Gregory: Oh, not in people's faces please. That can hurt]

What did you think about the gondola ride Gregory?

G: Uhhh?

K: I know you were watching the gondola quite a bit earlier

G: Yeah.

K: Yeah

G: A lot of people laughed and I laughed too. When we bumped that was funny.

S: There were some stragglers and we all had to rush and the lifties had to help us in really quickly and we JUST got in.

K: Gregory, you were pretty excited about the gondola earlier. You thought it looked like a big machine. What was it like to ride in it?

F: A goblin.

K: It was? Yeah. Can you tell me more about that?

F: [No response]

K: What happened to your skis when you went up the gondola? Where did they go? Did you take them with you?

F: No.

G: You took mine.

K: I took your skis. That's right. I brought them back on the train. Yes. Did other people take their skis up the gondola?

F: No.

N: I saw some.

K: Yeah, you saw some? And what did you do at the top when you got out of the gondola?

N: What?

K: What did you do when you got out of the gondola? Did you play?

N: We played.

K: Of the things that you did today Gregory, what did you like doing? Do you remember what we did today? [No response]

S: Just gently inside, Gregory.

K: Gregory, what did you like that you did today? Can you tell me something that you did today that you remember?

B: I was skiing outside.

K: You were skiing outside? Ahhh! Aren't you lucky?

G: Then they jump, then they ski way down the hill.

K: Who did that?

G: Ah....down the hill

K: Yeah. That's pretty fun to watch.

G: This guy's called Power Puppy.

K: You've got Power Puppy. And what do you remember doing today N? What's something that you'll remember about today? That you might think about?

N: About worms on the gondola. (I1: 01-14-06, pp.9-13)

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

Contribution of Practical and Personal Experience

The idea for this research emerged from my need as a ski instructor, as well as a parent, to gain a deeper understanding of a young child's experience in a full day alpine ski lesson. More specifically, I became concerned with the quality of the learning experience at destination ski resorts. This concern gained intensity during the 4-year period when I instructed ski lessons at a large destination resort. Ultimately, practical experience led me to question whether children between the ages of 3 and 4 possess the emotional, physical and mental capacities to endure a full day ski lesson. I strongly believed the needs of young children were being over-looked. Thus, as Wolcott (1990) asserts, "The more critical the observer's role and subjective assessment, the more important to have that role and presence acknowledged in the reporting" (p. 19). Although I anticipated in my proposal that my role would be that of participant-observer, I did not anticipate that I would become an integral part of the study. Nor could I have predicted that I would revise the methods and activities carefully selected while in the field.

In addition to my experiences as a ski instructor, my own experience of becoming a skier has influenced the direction of my research. More specifically, my experience of becoming a skier differed from that of the children with whom I worked during this study in that my family was an integral part of my experience. Thirty years ago, when my parents decided to take ski lessons, my brother and I were 5 and 4 respectively. That our parents provided the opportunity to become skiers was not particularly noteworthy, but rather, that they shared the journey with us, for this experience afforded the opportunity to bond as a family, through participation in sport. The enthusiasm my parents' expressed at being able to spend time with us made both my brother and me feel loved and our companionship valued. Our parents never objected to unloading at mid-station to accommodate our young muscles. Instead, they welcomed the opportunity to watch us glide down the slope. At age six, I was too young to appreciate the significance of my father's words, when he described to a friend with great pride my ability to 'power plow' at full speed, arms outstretched. Years later, when he reminisced about the way I dangled my poles, I enquired why he never tried to correct my form. His reply was lovely: "Why would I interfere when you were enjoying yourself so much?"

Although we eventually surpassed our parents and spent more time skiing with peers, mom and dad remained in the periphery, waving from the T-bar or waiting to share lunch in the chalet. Because the chalet was small enough that everyone knew each other, we were allowed to come and go as we pleased. If I got cold or tired, I knew that I could remain inside and visit with friends. As a result, I grew to love the chalet and all that the ski environment encompassed.

When the lift closed at three thirty, we often headed home to someone's house for a potluck dinner. There were no nannies or babysitters. Instead, with wind burned cheeks and achy legs we crammed around the dinner table in our ski sweaters and long johns to share a meal together. These childhood memories of skiing, intertwined with evenings with family friends, are some of my fondest memories of becoming a skier. Thus, it was not just the task of skiing that I enjoyed but the social milieu as well. I believe the meaningful connection established with my family while becoming a skier, accounts for why I feel 'at home' whenever and wherever I ski.

As a ski instructor, I recognized that my early memories of skiing were quite different from those of the young children I taught. These children participated for an entire day, in an unfamiliar environment, with a group of strangers. Not only was the experience of becoming a skier reduced to five days or less but also, and of equal importance, the children's identity as skiers morphed in the presence of strangers.

I have shared this personal account because it provides an example of how the relationships formed and strengthened by participating in sport appeared to contribute to a positive early experience. In addition, this example also demonstrates the impact of related activities either immediately within, as well as outside the sporting context. Just as games of hide-and-seek, sledding and playing inside the chalet contributed to my experience of becoming a skier, so too did the playful activities incorporated during periods of down time for the children who attend ski school.

Relational Learning and a Young Child's Experience of Becoming an Alpine Skier

The findings of the study suggest that interpersonal relationships contributed to the children's experience of becoming skiers in both a direct and indirect manner. Three subordinate and interrelated themes therefore include: 1) the experience of becoming a ski instructor and 2) the influence of significant others 3) my presence in, and contribution to, the research setting.

Relational learning, a form of learning that occurs within the context of a meaningful relationship between student and instructor, appeared to contribute to a young child's experience of becoming an alpine skier. Ultimately, the instructors' capacity to recognize and meet the student's individual needs for emotional and physical support facilitated the establishment of trust and the foundation for a meaningful relationship. The significance of the instructor-student relationship was not limited to the student's experience of becoming a skier. Rather, it appeared to have a bi-directional effect in that the instructors expressed they derived pleasure from interactions with their students. Whether the absence of a relationship with management, in addition to separation from family and friends residing of overseas, contributed to this relationship is unknown.

In addition, though to a lesser extent, relationships between student and parents, as well as student and support staff also appeared to contribute to the learning experience. Instances of parent-child interaction, both observed and informed, suggest that while perceived parental support appeared to have a positive impact on a young child's experience, parental pressure and negative feedback appeared to diminish this experience.

As a participant-observer, I had both a direct and indirect impact on the children's experience. For example, one group of children referred to me as "the puppet lady," while other groups commented on my whereabouts during their afternoon gondola ride (I1: 01-17-06, p6.).

A multi-modal approach to data collection, reflective of the qualitative tradition, was employed (Clark, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). The methods included: direct observation and field notes; structured activities such as art, play and story sharing to facilitate dialogue between and among myself and the participant(s); as well as artwork. Data analysis was based on the following procedures: "horizonalizing the data, forming clusters of meaning, providing textural as well as structural descriptions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). Because the intent of this research was to gain an understanding of young children's lived experience in a full day ski program, and therefore I was also concerned with the individual and his or her experience of "becoming a skier" (Moustakas, 1994).

Becoming a Skier: The Reconstruction of a Young Child's Ski School Experience

Although I conceived this research with the conviction that the experience of becoming a skier involved more than mastering the skill of 'sliding on snow,' I was nevertheless compelled to identify a defining moment. More specifically, on page 106 of this manuscript, I provide a description of the moment I perceived Sally's student recognized he had "become" a skier. With the exception of Charlie, the young boy who was terrified to put his skis on, the children we worked with were all able to descend the beginner slope, unassisted, by the end of their session. Moreover, as Sally noted, although "their day goes in a bit of a slump," the children appeared to leave with few, if no complaints, about returning the next morning (I1: 01-29-06, p.12). Charlie, however, did not fit this description.

When I attempted to re-construct Charlie's experience of becoming a skier, based on my perception of Abby's interpretation, many questions remained unanswered: Did Charlie experience any feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction or accomplishment during his week? Did he eventually identify himself as a skier? Charlie's story troubled me and made me feel very sad that the sport, which I had gained such confidence and pleasure from, was a source of stress and anxiety for this young child. I wrestled with the idea that Charlie's experience may have differed had he taken part in the study. Would the indoor activities have afforded alternative and emotionally safe opportunities for him to experience ski school? Finally, will Charlie's perception and understanding of alpine skiing influence his decision to participate in the future?

Contribution of the ski instructor. Before undertaking this research, I took for granted the instructors would possess the experience, practical knowledge and skills to facilitate the children in their journey of becoming skiers. Instead, the young women with whom I worked struggled to define themselves as both skiers, and ski instructors, in their own right. Consequently, I became more involved in the delivery of ski lessons than I had planned and I grew concerned that deviations from the prescribed methods may compromise the integrity of the study. However, as I began to adapt a more flexible approach to data collection, I realized the challenges I encountered along the way contributed to the insight I gained. For example, had I not experienced working with Heather during the first week, the instructors' capacity to relate to their students may not have seemed obvious. In many respects, Heather served as a foil to Sally: The friendly yet distant relationship with the former, contrasted greatly with the instant connection I shared with the latter. Moreover, unlike Heather, Sally was not only willing to assist me with my research, but she was also eager to contribute to her students' learning experiences.

When I proposed this study, I considered the instructor an integral part of the research process and was not concerned with her work experience per se. Instead, I conceptualized the instructor as an intermediary whose knowledge and practical experience would facilitate data collection. Upon learning that a number of the mini instructors were, in essence, students themselves, I re-conceptualized the instructor's role and potential contribution to the study. Through daily debriefing sessions, I not only gained an alternative interpretation of the children's experiences, but I also gained an understanding of how the instructional approach was filtered through the instructor's values, beliefs and attitudes toward early childhood ski instruction (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That Sally and Abby remained consistent in their efforts to provide 'memorable' experiences for their students, despite the perceived lack of respect accorded by supervisors, is evidence of their commitment. They managed to work within the constraints imposed by the task of ski instruction and the ski school environment to meet their students' emotional and physical needs. Whether the skills accrued through the process of certification would have facilitated the task of performing their job more effectively, improved the quality of their work experience and, in turn, contributed to the a more positive learning experience for the children, is unknown.

Instructional approach. Consistent with the literature reviewed, the findings of this research suggest that a developmentally appropriate and child centered approach to alpine ski pedagogy contributed to the participants' learning experience (Dubowski, 1986; Chen & Ennis, 2004; Jacobson, 2002; Jenninigs, 1999; Raines & Isbell, 1994; Sayer, 2001; Williamson, 1993). While Developmentally Appropriate Practice informed the choice of activities included as methods of data collection and instructional tools, theories from art, play and narrative therapies guided the creation and implementation of specific activities (Gullo, 1992). Underpinning this approach was a hybrid of Dewey's philosophy of experiential learning and the TGfU approach (Dewey, 1938; Thorpe, Bunker, & Almond, 1986). The ideas borrowed from these philosophies encompass the beliefs that: 1) learning is more meaningful and relevant when directed by the child; 2) demonstrating *why* children may chose to become skiers before receiving formal instructions about *how* to accomplish the task is worth considering (Thorpe, Bunker, & Almond, 1986).

By the end of data collection, Sally's on-hill instructional approach evolved from a focus on skill progression to a focus on developing an understanding of the task. Instead of proceeding through a series of related skills culminating in the snowplow turn, we assisted the children in making several descents in order for them to experience the sensation of skiing. In addition, Sally initiated the indoor component of the lesson with a reading of *My Day at Ski School*, a story detailing how a typical day at ski school unfolds.

In the latter two weeks of data collection, story time became an integral part of the lesson. Not only did it afford an opportunity for Sally and Abby to identify and address any concerns the children expressed about learning to ski, but also, and of equal importance, it provided an opportunity for the instructors to develop rapport and establish trust. Moreover, a second reading of the story at the end of the day helped the children to connect with their learning experience by reconstructing the story with themselves as the main characters (Dewey, 1938). Not only were the children excited to receive a personalized story, but so too were their parents, who gained a window into their children's day. Finally, the stories facilitated discussion about the ski school experiences thereby enabling the children to share additional tales with their parents.

Upon arrival, prior to the first reading of *My Day at Ski School*, the children seemed content to sit quietly and color. Often I sat at the table with them while the instructor greeted and assigned newcomers to the group. To initiate conversation, I began by making general comments about coloring. I then gently asked questions about their families; did they have brothers or sisters? Were they older or younger? Did they have any pets at home? Often I would share that I had two boys, about their age, who were also learning to ski. In the mean time, if any of the children experienced difficulties settling in, then either the den mom, or the instructor, would offer support. When all the children had arrived, the instructor began the morning by reading *My Day at Ski School.* By about 9:30 a.m. we proceeded outside to commence the on-hill portion of the lesson. At approximately 11:00 a.m., I headed back toward the ski school, to Starbucks, where I documented field notes before lunch. I returned to the ski school just after lunch to lead a craft activity before returning outside for the afternoon session. The activities included; a finger puppet with skis, a skiing snowman collage, or a singing activity. The finger puppet was a favorite among the children. In addition, it was the most effective activity as it generally satisfied the dual purpose as both an instructional tool and a method of data collection. Moreover, like the story, the puppet provided opportunities for the children to reconstruct their ski school experience. For Donatello, who did not speak English, his puppet provided a medium for him to demonstrate his understanding of skiing. Although the snowman craft provided opportunities to engage in casual conversations with the children, because the task required a great deal of support from the instructor and me, I found that in these instances, my role as a participant superceded that of observer.

The afternoon on-hill session was more relaxed than the morning as the children were often tired. A trip up the gondola to mid-station offered additional free play, which the instructor discussed with me during our daily debriefing session.

Becoming a Researcher: The 'Participant-Observer'

The greatest challenge I encountered was negotiating the roles of researcher and participant. Initially, during the latter three weeks of data collection, I felt torn between the desire to assist the young women with their task of becoming ski instructors and the need to maintain my position as a participant-observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For instance, on one particular afternoon I observed a group of children sprawled across the green mats in a variety of positions. I looked around in search of the instructor, but there appeared to be no one in charge. I glanced over at Sally, who immediately recognized my look of concern, and suggested we include the children in our group. As we rounded-up the children, Sally picked up a little girl who had fallen asleep on the snow. She carried the sleeping child over to the outdoor cushions and covered the girl with her jacket. It was another half hour before the instructor returned. In the meantime, the Den mom collected the girl and took her back to the ski school. When the instructor finally resurfaced, he bashfully explained that he had never taught preschool age children and had little understanding of their needs. Although the situation was resolved and no harm came to any of the children, I was in a difficult position. As a ski instructor, I felt a responsibility to look out for the children left unsupervised. As a parent, I felt the natural urge to protect the children. Finally, as a researcher, incumbent in the philosophy underpinning this study was the commitment to place the children's needs above all else, however, I also struggled with my responsibility to the resort that had afforded me access.

By the time the instructor returned, the children in Sally's group had lost interest and were ready for their ride up the gondola. Initially, I felt frustrated that I had lost an opportunity to collect data. Upon reflection, however, I gained a sense of who I wanted to become as a researcher. Moreover, I realized that my contribution was not limited to the written word, but rather, that I had the opportunity to contribute directly while in the field. Thus, instead of viewing my involvement with the delivery of lessons and the instructors as detrimental to my ability to observe and record the children's experiences, I perceived my involvement was *essential* to my gaining a deeper understanding of the children's ski school experience. In fact, because I became part of the children's experience, I believe I developed a deeper level of rapport with the instructor. When asked to explain how her approach had changed over the course of data collection stated, "And so I'm more confident and maybe because I've had you around" (I1: 01-29-06, p.1).

Trustworthiness of the Findings

The process of gaining a deeper understanding of a young child's experience in a full day destination alpine ski lesson proved quite different in practice form theory. Initially, I faced the challenge of establishing rapport with an instructor who seemed disinterested in both her work and the study. With trepidation, I accepted that I had lost a week's worth of data and perhaps undermined my effort to ensure "prolonged engagement in the field" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302). Fortunately, however, I was familiar with the ski school culture and more specifically, possessed extensive experience working with the age group under consideration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My professional experience required, and therefore afforded, opportunities to develop skills in establishing rapport and trust with young children (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In retrospect, the opportunity to work with Heather proved quite valuable. Whether it provides, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) label, a "negative case," is debatable (p. 312).Of importance, is the fact that the difficulties I encountered establishing rapport, and subsequently, accessing Heather's students, heightened my awareness of the significance of my relationship with the instructor and the impact this relationship had on the type and quality of data I collected. Though I made a concerted effort to hold back and not interfere with Heather's lesson, which was difficult at times, because, from experience, I could see how small changes in her demeanor may have facilitated rapport with her students, I felt it was not my place to do so (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I yearned for Heather to sing a song or read a story *on her own initiative*. I wanted to suggest that she vary her tone and smile at the children, demonstrate some warmth. Amazed by the impact her disposition had on me, I wonder if the children were affected in the same way or even at all.

Due to the absence of rapport and perceived loss of data, I elected to recruit a new instructor. While I was fortunate to gain the opportunity to work with Sally, Abby and Helen, I now had to work with three different instructors instead of just one. Moreover, because the children were not required to register for five consecutive days, I was unable to maintain the data collection schedule I had originally proposed. This unanticipated change, from four waves of five-day camps with five participants per week, to three weeks of daily lessons that varied from one to four days required that I modify my approach. As a result, the memory book craft had to be re-thought and some of the other activities abandoned. Moreover, the amount of time to establish rapport was, in some cases, reduced considerably. Although the methods of data collection remained diverse, due to the amount of instructional support I provided, I did miss opportunities to document comments or follow-up on salient pieces information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Fortunately, I was able to work primarily with Sally, which provided some continuity and consistency across the data (Lincoln & Guba). In addition, I grew increasingly concerned that the additional role of mentor, which I had not anticipated, may compromise the integrity of the study (Lincoln & Guba).

In the conversation on pages 109-110, I took for granted the children understood that I was referring to the ski mat when I mentioned the "green mats". Although I did not catch significance of the child's response at the time of our conversation, when analyzing the transcript, I realized that perhaps the child's bath mat was green and that was why he discussed events surrounding his bath mat. This oversight not only demonstrates how easily a child's response may be misinterpreted, but also highlights the importance of triangulation across sources of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Although it would have been ideal to capture the lived experience directly from the children, a 'poly vocal' approach afforded insights that may not otherwise have developed (Sparkes, 1995). For this reason, and in accordance with the social constructivist assumptions underpinning this research, I weaved the instructors', the children's, as well as the parents' perspectives together to provide a "thick and rich" interpretation of children's ski school experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Sparkes, 1995).

Finally, as a "negative case," Charlie's story suggests a multi-modal approach to early childhood ski instruction is warranted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 309-313). To reduce the experience of becoming a skier to one context, and one defining moment, not only undermines the constructivist premise of this research, but also the underlying paradigmatic framework.

In 1985, Lincoln and Guba published *Naturalistic Inquiry*, in which they asserted "conventional trustworthiness criteria (internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) [is] inconsistent with the axioms and procedures of naturalistic inquiry." As a substitute, they proposed that qualitative researchers establish "credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability" (pp. 42-43). Twenty years later, with the omission of the latter, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) continue to promote this definition of trustworthiness. Though I subscribe to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach, I am nevertheless uncomfortable for the authors justify their technique on the premise that "there exist substitute criteria (called credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) together with corresponding empirical procedures that adequately (if not absolutely) affirm the trustworthiness of naturalistic approaches (p. 43). Instead, I prefer Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul's (1997) conceptualization of trustworthiness, which I perceive is inherently more consistent with the qualitative tradition:

> For readers of qualitative studies, an author's forthrightness helps to estimate the trustworthiness of the account, to understand the experience and empathy of the researcher, and, perhaps, to learn from the researcher's blind spots and blunders, as well as enabling biases and successes, how to approach the Other with genuine respect and sensitivity. We remember a scholar who spoke of *'functional bawdy'* in Shakespeare's plays; perhaps the criterion here is *'functional revelation'* (p. 358).

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The extent to which lack of certification and experience enabled data collection is unknown. Although I had to spend more time assisting the instructors with the on-hill portion of their lesson, this task afforded valuable opportunities for me to work directly with the children. Moreover, the assistance I provided during both on and off hill sessions helped to strengthen my relationship with the instructors. As a result, I not only gained their respect for being very 'hands-on,' but also their continued support for the study. Thus, my practical experience as a ski instructor contributed in more ways than I anticipated.

Had I envisioned I would fulfill such an active role in the delivery of the on-hill portion of the lesson, an ethnographic rather than a phenomenological approach may have been a more appropriate choice of methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, upon further consideration, given the financial constraints associated with conducting fieldwork and the amount of time an ethnographic study would require, such an approach may have been an unlikely alternative, notably for a Masters thesis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

I do, however, consider the amount of time spent in the field a limitation of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Because this was my first experience collecting data and I was required to fine tune my approach as I proceeded, I felt that just when I was getting comfortable with my role as a researcher, field work came to an end. Unfortunately, it took me a couple of weeks to realize how useful the computer and photos were as a tool to communicate with the children. Consumed by the process I had outlined in my proposal, I was initially oblivious to the children's cues. It was not until the third week that I modified *My Day at Ski School* to include photos of the children. Additionally, because the indoor time was limited, I reduced the number of activities introduced during the day. Moreover, I modified the type of activities incorporated to fit the time allotted and to reflect the developmental stages of the children. For example, I eliminated painting and drawing after the first week as the former proved very messy and time consuming, while the latter elicited little interest and conversation. Ultimately, the children seemed to prefer to color rather than create their own drawings, which may have been a function of their age. Moreover, as I became acquainted with support staff who shared their experiences in other ski school locations at the resort, I realized that I may have gained a more complete understanding of a young child's ski school experience had I spent time at each of the locales. Consequently, the results of this study may be more robust had I spent an additional month in the field.

Because I was unable to accompany the children on their afternoon gondola rides, I missed the opportunity to observe the group directly while they engaged in free-play up the mountain as well as during their gondola ride. Instead, I had to rely on the instructor's recollection and reconstruction of the children's behaviors and conversations during debriefing sessions. The problem with this approach is the potential for recall to be distorted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Finally, although I met briefly with management to discuss my initial thoughts of data collection, I did not gain a deeper understanding of their perception of the children's experience. This fourth perspective would have added an interesting dimension to the data.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there has been an abundance of work completed in the area of early childhood development, little is know about the physical capacity of 3 and 4 year old children in sport and recreation programs. Without an understanding of their physical capacity, how can ski schools, program coordinators, preschool teachers, and government agencies, develop and implement safe and effective programs? Additionally, there is an absence of literature related to acceptable amounts of physical activity from the perspective of over-participation. More specifically, although government guidelines provide recommendations for the structuring of preschool programs, there are no guidelines established for outdoor programs such as alpine skiing. Guidelines specifying appropriate amounts of indoor time and periods of rest are required to ensure the young child's overall well-being.

Recommendations for Future Research

A deeper understanding of young children's perceptions of their experiences in physical activity and recreational programs provided valuable information about their interests as well as their psychological and physical needs. The insights gained by this study may encourage researchers to continue to explore the psychological and physical impacts of participation in organized sport and recreation programs at an early age. In addition, this research may arouse awareness about the special needs of preschool age children in sport education contexts. More specifically, the need to develop policies and guidelines to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of children enrolled in recreational programs, especially those that double as childcare facilities. In addition, the notion of "Duty of Care," could be extended to provide instructors with specific training to deal with parents or guardians, who provide negative feedback to their students. Although intervention by the instructor may not lead to permanent changes in the parents' behavior, some parents may become aware of the potential impact of their actions. The expertise of a sport psychologist, specializing in early childhood practice, may be a valuable member of the ski school, especially at the start of the season when training new recruits.

Future research may also consider the early experience of older or elite skiers. A comparison of the experiences from these groups may provide insight about factors that contributed to their learning experience and consequently, their desire to engage in the sport. In addition, research focusing specifically on the attitudes, values and behaviors of parents who enroll their children in ski schools at destination ski resorts may inform policy makers about the special needs of children in these settings.

Implications

The findings of this study merit consideration not only because they demonstrated the potential benefits of employing an experiential approach to ski instruction, embedded within Developmentally Appropriate Practice, but also because it raises awareness about the rationale guiding early childhood ski programs. More specifically, what does a laissez-faire attitude toward the certification of ski instructors reveal about the philosophy of early childhood ski instruction? What message is conveyed to staff by assigning uncertified instructors to the 3 and 4 year old program? What may such policies, and the justification provided, reveal about the beliefs of 3 and 4 year old children becoming skiers? Moreover, to what extent may the 'no certification policy' undermine the rationale for a full day program? Consequently, one implication of this research may be the need for government agencies affiliated with child welfare to work with the CSIA, as well as with individual ski schools, to monitor early childhood ski instruction and to establish guidelines for instructor training, qualifications, length and overall structure of ski programs.

In addition to supporting an experiential approach, embedded within Developmentally Appropriate Practice, the findings of this study suggest that some 3 and 4 year old children may not be physically ready to be immersed in a full-day of alpine ski instruction. Moreover, it makes intuitive sense to reduce the length of the day and to end the lesson when a child is most likely to generate positive memories of the experience. A reduced schedule may lead to perceived psychological benefits in that the child may be more likely to cope with the physical and psychological demands of the task when less fatigued (Chen, Darst, & Pangrazi, 2001; Chen & Ennis, 2004). In turn, a positive learning experience has the potential to inspire the motivation required to persevere the following day (Weigand & Burton, 2002). Of equal importance, a reduced schedule may afford more time for the child to ski with his or her parents, thereby extending the experience of becoming a skier outside of the learning environment, making participation in the sport more relevant and meaningful. The idea of incorporating family time or some form of parent participation merits consideration.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that relational learning contributed to a young child's experience of becoming a skier. Although relational learning, facilitated through activities and techniques drawn from Developmentally Appropriate Practice and an experiential learning approach contributed to the children's experience, additional factors are recognized. More specifically, interaction with parents, preconceived notions of skiing conveyed by siblings or other sources, mental and physical capacities, as well as the child's willingness and readiness to learn. Nevertheless, an experiential approach to alpine ski instruction, combined with developmentally appropriate activities afforded opportunities for down time and appealed to alternative learning modalities. In turn, the instructor's teaching philosophy and her approach appeared to be shaped by her experience, her value and belief system, her working relationship with management, as well as by the constraints imposed by the ski program.

As a result of this research I have gained new insights about my own journey of becoming a skier and I have considered the enduring impact of relational learning from a personal perspective. Additionally, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities of qualitative research and I have developed an awareness of myself as a qualitative researcher. Finally, I have gained a deeper understanding of the physical and emotional needs of young children in a full day destination alpine ski lesson.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Information Letter

Project Title: The Young Child's Lived Experience in an Alpine Ski Program: A Multi-Modal Approach to Data Collection

Investigators:

Kate Z. Davies, Masters Student
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University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
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The intent of this research is to explore the experiences of young children in a sport education context. In addition, this study will explore whether a developmentally appropriate, multi-modal approach to ski instruction facilitates data collection and in the process, enriches the learning experience.

Ski instruction is somewhat unique in that very young children are often instructed for an entire day. Unlike other sports, the long day provides latitude to explore alternative methods of instruction. Such methods may be invaluable for those students who lack the perceived physical competence to master skills and experience the sense of accomplishment essential to inspiring an enduring love of the sport.

Because young children generally lack the physical strength and stamina to engage in a full day ski lesson, a common misconception among parents is that early childhood ski instruction is more of a babysitting service than a learning experience. For this reason, a program designed to meet the physical, cognitive, psychological and social needs of young students may not only be more appropriate but also more attractive to parents.

Benefits of participating in this study:

- Personalized instructor training in a novel "multi-modal approach."
- Access to all materials, supplied by the researcher, as well as the proposed program.
- Affiliation with one of Canada's top five research-intensive universities.
- Acknowledgment, in publications of this research, for contribution to the study.
- A unique opportunity to demonstrate that the resort has a progressive ski school, committed to considering the long-term impact of early childhood ski instruction.
- Potential to contribute to the advancement of early childhood ski instruction that may set a new standard within the industry and perhaps play a role in shaping the way early childhood sport is instructed in general.

You may be wondering, "Who is this individual? What sort of experience and qualifications does she possess to make such assumptions? What would participation in this study involve?"

Who is the researcher?
- Kate Davies, nee Hacking
- CSIA Level II, 10 years experience instructing and coaching
- Master's student, Sport Psychology, University of Alberta, mother of two boys

Ski industry experience:
- Four seasons Whistler Kids, (privates, valley kids, club and mini programs)
- One season Whistler Kids summer program
- One season Corporate Sales, Whistler-Blackcomb
- One season coaching Nancy Greene, Red Mountain, Rossland, BC
- One season Sales and Marketing, Sunshine Village
- Five seasons Elementary Ski School Program, Kirkland Lake, ON
- Four seasons Pineland Ski School, Raven Mt., ON

What will this research involve?

1. Procedures to be completed prior to commencing the study:
- All pedagogical material included in the study will be pilot tested with children of the same age to determine appropriateness of language and content.
- Study to be approved by the University of Alberta Review Ethics Board.
- Training sessions will be hosted by the researcher to ensure that the instructor and the supervisor are both familiar, and comfortable with, the proposed program.
- Researcher will meet with parents to explain the nature and potential benefits of the study as well as to gain consent for their child's participation.
- If the resort is interested in participating in the study, the researcher will meet with the director and or supervisor in late October to discuss the study in greater detail and will provide a copy of the proposed study for approval by the director.

2. The study itself:
- Potential start date: second week of January.
- Duration of study: four weeks (4 x 1 week of lessons).
- The program under consideration will include stories, play and art to promote understanding and awareness of skiing and the ski environment. Although these activities will be interspersed throughout the lesson, the technical or "on–hill" component of lesson will not be altered in any way.
- The resort will select the instructor responsible for instructing the four groups of participants, over the course of the four-week period, this study will encompass.
- The researcher will observe participants during both the indoor and on hill components of the lesson.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, the researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews, held at a time agreed upon between the instructor and the researcher.

Background:

Most preschool age children enjoy and routinely engage in activities such as story telling reading, drawing, coloring and free play. If these activities are designed with ski instruction in mind, they may facilitate understanding by providing young children with a relevant language to communicate their thoughts and feelings about the lesson. Moreover, a multi-modal instructional approach may allow instructors to remain on task while periodically shifting the demands from the physical to the affective domain, reinforcing concepts and skills introduced through modeling techniques. In the process, this approach may add the variety needed to maintain the young student's attention over the course of a full day lesson.

This study will therefore explore whether a multi-modal instructional approach may provide a range of physical and mental activities that are suited to the learning processes of young children. Ultimately, it is anticipated that such an approach may facilitate understanding, reduce anxiety, arouse interest and, in turn, provide a positive learning experience by reducing the physical, and possible psychological demands of engaging in a full day lesson at an early age.

I have selected this program as a potential site to conduct my research for it has been my experience that the program instructors are committed "to helping their students create memorable experiences," the philosophy underlying this research project in specific and my personal beliefs about instructing sport in general. As educational theorist John Dewey asserted: "Every experience lives on in future experiences." Therefore, the young student's early ski school experience has the potential to inspire a love of skiing.

Please sign below to indicate that the ski school has granted permission to the principal investigator to conduct the research described above at the ski school, during the months of December and January 2006

Program Director	Printed Name	Date
Program Manager	Printed Name	Date
Principal Investigator	Printed Name	Date
Co-Investigator	Printed Name	Date
Witness	Printed Name	Date

Appendix 2. Information Letter (Parent/Guardian)

Title of Project: The Young Child's Lived Experience in an Alpine Ski Program: A Multi-Modal Approach to Data Collection

Investigators:

Kate Z. Davies, Masters Student
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
University of Alberta, Edmonton AB
(780)435-0919 kdavies@ualberta.ca

Dr. Billy Strean, Associate Professor
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
(780) 492-3890 billy.strean@ualberta.ca

December, 2005

Dear Parent or Guardian

There are two purposes of this research. The first is to gain an understanding of the young child's experience in an alpine ski program. The second is to explore an alternative approach to traditional teaching methods that may enrich the learning experience. The on-hill component of the lesson will not be altered in any way. Developmentally appropriate activities, specifically related to ski instruction will be conducted between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. as well as between 3:00 and 3:30 p.m. I will lead all in-door activities, which will include art, play, and story sharing. The data I collect will be used for my graduate thesis in Sport Psychology, conducted under the supervision of Dr. Billy Strean, in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta.

Procedures:

- If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a background information questionnaire for your child. In addition, at the end of the week, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire so that I may gain your ideas about your child's experience in the program. I will use arts and crafts, play and story sharing activities as an opportunity to ask the children what they think about ski school.

Benefits:

- One potential benefit arising from your child's participation in this study is that he or she may gain a better understanding of alpine skiing, the ski environment and what it means to become a skier. In turn, an early ski experience that is personally meaningful may provide the foundation on which an enduring love of the sport may be built. Additionally, your child's participation in this study may contribute to our understanding of young children's physical and psychological needs in an early childhood ski program.

Risks:

- There are no known risks associated with this study.

Confidentiality:

- To ensure confidentiality, your child's data will be assigned an ID number, and his or her name (and any reference to information which might "give away' his or her identity) will be removed from the file. A master list of names that correspond to the ID numbers will be stored in a locked file cabinet (in a locked room) to which only the investigator has access. These measures will help ensure that any information you provide is treated in the utmost confidence. Information is retained for a period of five years post publication, after which it will be destroyed.

Freedom to Withdraw:

- If your child declines to continue or you withdraw from the study your information will be removed from the study. If you wish to withdraw your child you can simply inform me, either in person or alternatively contact me via telephone or e-mail, and your child's data will be removed from the study. There are no negative consequences associated with withdrawing from the study.

If you have concerns about this study, you may contact Dr. Brian Maraj, who is the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee for the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta Tel: (780)-492-5910 E-mail: brian.maraj@ualberta.ca. Dr. Maraj has no direct involvement in the study.

Thank you for your time,

Kate Z. Davies,
Masters Student

Appendix 3. Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: The young Child's Lived Experience in an Alpine Ski Program: A Multi-Modal Approach to Data Collection

Investigators:

Kate Z. Davies Masters Student Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB (780) 435-0919 kdavies@ualberta.ca	Dr. Billy Strean, Associate Professor Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB (780) 492-3890 billy.strean@ualberta.ca

(To be completed by the parent/legal guardian of the research participant)

Do you understand that your child has been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you and your child read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet	Yes	No
Do you and your child understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you and your child had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that your child is free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your child's information will be withdrawn at your request?	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you and your child? Do you understand who will have access to your child's information?	Yes	No

This study was explained to us by: ______________________________

I agree to take part in this study:

____________________	__________	__________
Signature of Research Participant	Date	Witness
____________________	__________	__________
Printed Name	Date	Printed Name

I give my permission for my child to participate in this study:

____________________	__________	__________
Signature of Parent/Guardian	Date	Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

________________________	__________
Signature of Investigator or Designee	Date

The information sheet must be attached to this consent form and a copy of both forms given to the participant.

Appendix 4. Background Information

Title of Project: The Young Child's Lived Experience in an Alpine Ski Program: A Multi-Modal Approach to Data Collection

Investigators:

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Dr. Billy Strean, Associate Professor
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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for permitting your child to participate in this study which will explore the young child's experience in an early childhood ski program. My reason for collecting background information is for demographic purposes only. To ensure confidentiality, your child's information will be assigned a participant number. This number will correspond to his or her name on a master list which will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Participant #_______

Participant's Name:______________________________ Age:____ Gender:____

City/town/state/province/ Country where your family is visiting from:

____

Please state whether your child has ever participated in an alpine ski lesson.

____

Please state whether your child has any previous knowledge of alpine skiing or the ski environment. (Does your child have any older siblings or relatives who ski?)

____

____

____

Thank you for your time,

Kate Davies, Masters Student

Appendix 5. Questionnaire

Title of Project: The Young Child's Lived Experience in an Alpine Ski Program:
A Multi-Modal Approach to Data Collection

Investigators:

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Dr. Billy Strean, Associate Professor
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
(780) 492-3890 billy.strean@ualberta.ca

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for permitting your child to participate in this study which will explore the young child's experience in an early childhood ski program. The intent of this research is two-fold; first, to gain insight about the children's perceptions of their experience in a full day ski lesson; and second, to explore the potential of an alternative method to reinforce concepts and skills learned through traditional teaching methods. The philosophy underlying this research, as well as that shared by both myself and the ski school, is that children's experience should be more important than performance.

The following questions are to gain your ideas about your child's experience in the program. If required, please use the space provided to include any additional information you feel may be helpful. Thank you.

- Did your child have any concerns about continuing with or returning to ski school?

- If yes, when did these concerns occur?
    - At the end of each lesson and prior to the next lesson
    - After the first lesson and before the second lesson only.
    - Other

- Did your child say what any of the concerns were, such as:
    - I miss mommy and daddy
    - The day is too long
    - I get tired/ cold/ hungry
    - My feet/legs/ body hurt
    - I don't want to go skiing
    - I want to stay inside
    - I don't want to wear my skis/ ski boots/ helmet
    - I don't want to participate in the indoor activities
    - I want to play outside

  - Ski school is too noisy
  - Other

- Did your child indicate in any way whether he or she liked or disliked his/her ski school experience? Please state if you think "neutral" would best describe your child's experience.

- Did your child identify a particular aspect or a particular day that he or she liked and/ or disliked?

- Has your child said if he or she would like to continue to ski when you return home or your vacation has ended?

- Based on your impression of the program, would you enroll your child in a similar ski program if you returned to Whistler? If you visited another resort?

Thank you for your time and interest in this study. If you would like a copy of the report that will be prepared once the study has been completed, please include either your mailing or e-mail address in the space below.

____

____

____

____

Sincerely,

Kate Z. Davies,
Masters Student

Appendix 6. Coding Scheme
The Young Child's Experience in a Full Day Alpine Ski Lesson

The Child

The child refers to the learner and that which he or she contributed to his or her own learning experience. Secondary themes include: the child's disposition, developmental capacity, preferred mode of learning, fatigue, knowledge and physical needs.

Disposition

This theme referred to the child's disposition while engaged in the learning environment. There are sub-themes:

- Introverted: refers to the tendency to demonstrate autonomous behavior or a need for autonomy. May also exhibit shy, timid or withdrawn behaviors.
- Extroverted: refers to the tendency to demonstrate pro-social, outgoing, boisterous or assertive behaviors
- Motivated: refers to the child's goal orientation, which may be characterized by either task or ego oriented behaviors, may be either intrinsic or extrinsic
    - Perceived competence
    - Self-esteem
- Anxious: may refer to separation anxiety, fear associated with either the learning environment (noisy/ unfamiliar) or ability to complete the task , and or the need for reassurance.
- Resilient: refers to the child's ability to cope with the learning environment and his or her engagement in the task.
- Values/ Beliefs: may refer to perceived parental expectations

Developmental Capacity

This theme refers to the physical, cognitive and emotional development of the child.

- Physical capacity: refers to the child's strength and stamina
- Cognitive capacity: refers to the child's ability to understand concepts both related and unrelated to the task, his or her ability to convey this understanding (memory) as well as an awareness of his or her learning environment. (*Limited attention span/ loss of interest may be a developmental consideration or may be related to that which the learning environment affords)
- Emotional capacity: refers to displays of either positive or negative affect while engaged in the learning environment.
- Creative capacity: refers to child's need to be playful, for example; behaviors that reflect creativity, the use of imagination and the desire to be silly

Preferred mode of learning

Refers to the child's preference for one or more of the following modes of learning; there are four modes.

- Visual

- Kinesthetic
- Auditory

Fatigue
This theme refers to the child's need (observed/reported behaviors) for sleep or rest above and beyond what it is normally required.

Knowledge
This theme refers to knowledge accrued either through previous experience with sport and or exposure to the ski environment. There are two sub themes:

- Direct source of knowledge: refers to knowledge or experience gained by the child (ie: previous child care/ pre school experience)
- Indirect source of knowledge: refers to knowledge gained through siblings, parents, friends or alternative media such as books, family videos or photographs.

Physical Needs
The theme of physical needs refers to the child's need for sufficient nourishment, warm clothing and shelter; therefore physical comforts.

Learning Environment

The Learning Environment refers generally to the support (or lack thereof) afforded to the Child. The form of support afforded may be direct or indirect, tangible or intangible.

DIRECT:
This theme refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate the child received support directly from an individual, set of individuals or from the physical environment. There are four sub themes; parents, instructor, peers and support staff, which can be further divided into either tangible or intangible forms of support.

Parents Tangible: refers to either financial or material support such as

- Enrolment in ski lessons
- Proper ski equipment
- Appropriate clothing
- Adequate snacks
- Physical affection (tangible emotional)
- Physical displays of encouragement such as smiling or through gestures such as clapping or waving

Intangible: generally refers to emotional support

- Did observed behaviors seemed to indicate that parents generally conveyed to the child that they would meet their child's emotional and physical needs in relation to the new learning environment?
- Did observed behaviors seemed to indicate that parents generally attempted to understand the learning experience from the child's perspective?

  - Did observed behaviors seemed to indicate that parents generally provided encouragement?
  - Did observed behaviors seemed to indicate that parents generally demonstrated an interest in the child's experience?
  - Did observed behaviors seemed to indicate that parents generally demonstrated unconditional acceptance of their child's accomplishments no matter how small or the nature of these accomplishments? (Note: for some children, learning to cope with an unfamiliar environment and building new relationships are as or perhaps more important, than succeeding at the task at hand).

Tangible: refers to whether observed behaviors seemed to indicate that siblings generally;

  - skied with and physically assist the child
  - provided physical affection
  - modeled desired behavior (provide a visual picture of what skiing looked like)

Intangible: refers to whether observed behaviors seemed to indicate that siblings generally;

  - provided verbal encouragement
  - demonstrated enthusiasm for the sport and therefore served as a source of inspiration

Instructor: This theme encompasses both emotional and physical support.

Tangible: refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate the instructors generally provided physical support such as:

- Assisted with gear and getting dressed to go outdoors
- Assisted with basic needs such as going to the washroom
- Assisted on and off the train, green and magic carpet
- Help put mitts on when taken off
- Dry clothing in dryer when wet
- Provide snacks and beverages when required
- Provide adequate periods of physical rest

Intangible: refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate the instructor generally;

- Placed children's well-being, needs and interest above all else.
- Honored and respected the children's need for reassurance, socialization, free play and the opportunity to ask questions.
- Demonstrated an understanding of each child's individual capabilities
- Created an emotionally safe environment in which most children felt competent and safe.
- Developed rapport and trust
- Teaching experience, philosophy and approach reflected needs of 3-4 years
- Personality; engaging, imaginative, creative, takes initiative, kind, caring
- Personal coping strategies: persistent, resilient

Peers: refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate peers generally provided emotional and or physical support.

Tangible:

- Refers to physical interaction through play and socialization with each other

Intangible:

- Refers to overt behaviors such as encouragement, empathy, development of rapport, and establishment of friendship

Support staff refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate support staff generally provided emotional and or physical support.

Tangible:

- Refers to physical assistance re: with equipment, clothing, going to the washroom, cuddles, nourishment

Intangible:

- Refers to reassurance, encouragement, affection, understanding

INDIRECT SUPPORT:

This theme refers to observed behaviors that seemed to indicate the child received support indirectly from an individual, set of individuals or from the physical environment. There are two sub themes; parents and ski school environment which can be further divided into either tangible or intangible forms of support.

Parents:

Tangible: generally refers to physical support

- Made child part of processes of selecting equipment/ clothing
- Provided a comfortable place and adequate time for child to adjust to new environment and overcome jet lag prior to commencing lessons
- Ensured adequate nourishment prior to attending ski school
- Helped child become familiar with ski school and ski environment before attending first lesson by taking child on a tour of the facilities.
- Assisted child with his or her equipment/ locating a cubby and finding the washroom.

Intangible: generally refers to emotional support

- Prepared child with a description and explanation of 'the who, what, where, when and why of' ski school prior to arrival.
- Was available to answer questions and concerns

Ski School Environment: this theme refers to both tangible and intangible support afforded indirectly by the learning environment. These include:

- The influence of managerial style on the Instructor's experience, and, in turn, on the child's experience (Instructor receive sufficient support)
- The design/ layout of the physical environment; refers to proximity of ski school to base of mountain, pitch of slope, state of carpets (free vs. covered with snow)
- Program: Appropriate from instructor's perspective? Adequate periods of rest throughout the day for instructor? Effect on instructor's ability to provide a quality experience
- Policies and procedures: sensible? Easy for instructor to follow and uphold?

Task

The Task refers to the set of motor skill(s) that, when performed as a sequence, result in alpine skiing There are sub themes; program structure, expectations, degree of engagement and instructional approach.

Program structure

This theme generally refers to whether the task is developmentally appropriate. There are eight sub-themes:

- *Length of day*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the length of the day had either a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Number of consecutive days*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the number of consecutive days engaged in the program had either a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Time engaged in the task*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the time spent engaged in the task had either a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience
- *Outcome orientation*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that an outcome or results based approach had either a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Process orientation*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that an experiential approach had either a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Child centered*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the extant program has a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience. More specifically, to what extent did the program in general and the lesson in particular, facilitate rapport, contribute to the child's understanding of the learning environment and, as result, helped to reduce anxiety.
- *Group size*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the size of the group had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience. (Did the size of the group and, consequently, time spent idle seemed to be related to the child's level of interest?)
- Destination vs. Club

Expectations

- *Children's perceived expectations*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the perceived expectations of the children, by their parents, their instructor and or the support staff, had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Perceived parental expectations*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the perceived expectations conveyed had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Program expectations*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate that the instructor's perceived expectations had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.

Degree of engagement

- *Interesting/ meaningful*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate the extant program had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Challenging*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate the degree of challenge inherent in the extant program had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *State of anxiety*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate the extant program had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's state of anxiety and hence their experience.

Instructional Approaches

- *Holistic or developmentally appropriate approach*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate the inclusion of various media to facilitate the child's understanding of the task(s) to be performed had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.
- *Immersion vs. progression*: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate teaching the 'why before the how' of alpine skiing has a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.

Variable vs. blocked practice: refers to whether observed behavior seemed to indicate a schedule of on-hill training interspersed with alternative, yet related activities such as songs, crafts or stories about skiing had a positive, neutral or negative impact on the child's experience.